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Funding cuts could hit hard

BY SUNIL PECK

Disabled people could be hit hard by funding cuts to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), say campaigners.

The DWP, which funds disabled people's benefits, the Office for Disability Issues, and the Pathways to Work and Access to Work jobs programmes, is to receive a below inflation settlement, an analysis of March's Budget has revealed.

Shadow minister for disabled people, Jeremy Hunt, said he was worried about the impact of the cuts on the level of benefits for disabled people.

He said: "We know that poverty rates for disabled people have been increasing, even though they have been decreasing for pensioners and children.

"The big concern is that if disability benefits are affected by the cash squeeze on the department, then those rates will rise even further." He was also "very concerned" about the funding of the Pathways to Work programme and said the government had failed to "put their money where their mouth is".

"We are worried that what it will mean is that Pathways will only help the less severely disabled people who are going to be lower cost in terms of getting back into the labour market."

Ruth Scott, policy and government affairs manager for the disability charity Scope, said the cuts could undermine progress towards equality for disabled people.

She said: "Scope has already had grave concerns about the level of funding allocated to the government's welfare reform proposals, but the news that funding for the Department for Work and Pensions is to be cut in real terms is deeply worrying.

"If the government is to realise its ambitions for improving disabled people's life chances then it must ensure that the



Fully focused: Government cuts could make it harder for disabled people to find work

funding settlement for the DWP is adequate and sustained."

Paul Treloar, director of policy and services at Disability Alliance, said the charity had "serious concerns" about the cuts. He said it was "strange" that the government

thought the best way of carrying out welfare reform was by cutting funding to the DWP.

Chris Brace, campaigns director at RADAR, said: "This is a concern, and it is something that we are going to be following closely, to ensure that there is no

compromise as they roll out Pathways to Work."

A DWP spokeswoman told *DN*: "The departmental settlement applies across the DWP. How that settlement will be distributed is still to be decided at this time in the spending cycle."

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Poverty strategy 'disappointing'

BY PAUL CARTER

Disability campaigners have criticised the government's new child poverty strategy for not doing enough to address the needs of families affected by disability.

The strategy* was published by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and is a key part of the government's commitment to halve child poverty by 2010.

Neil Crowther, head of policy for the Disability Rights Commission, called the document "very disappointing", saying it did not contain "anything fundamentally new or exciting".

He said: "The fact there doesn't appear to be any structured consideration of the impact on families is a worry given that the DWP is the lead department on disability equality, and needs to practice what it preaches and lead by example."

Steve Broach, campaign manager of the Every Disabled Child

Matters (EDCM) umbrella group, said: "The government's new strategy has a single page – three paragraphs – on needs of families with disabled children.

"While we welcome the fact the strategy has recognised the extra costs and barriers to work which put families with disabled children at risk of poverty, we need to see much more detail on what the government is proposing to do to tackle these risks."

Francine Bates, chief executive of Contact A Family, a member of EDCM, said she was disappointed there were no specific measures for families with disabled children. She said: "We'd like to see proposals on appropriate and affordable childcare, plus an increase in benefits to reflect the real cost of raising a disabled child."

Paul Treloar, director of policy and services at Disability Alliance, said addressing the poverty of disabled children should be a "crucial" part of the government's strategy and the failure to do more was a "flaw" in its approach.

Anne McGuire, minister for disabled people, told *DN*: "It is untrue to say that the government is ignoring these issues."

She said policies targeted at disabled children and adults would play a "key role" in meeting targets on child poverty, and said the government had increased disabled children's benefits and tax credit premiums by "far more than the increase in the cost of living".

She said: "We know that to meet our ambitious child poverty targets we must ensure that people with disabilities are given every opportunity to succeed in the job market and have access to the services and support that will enable parents to support their children."

*Working for Children; visit www.dwp.gov.uk/childpoverty/

On the cover: Falklands veteran Simon Weston. See profile, pages 30-31. Picture by Ivy Broadhead

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RENAULT

Police said man with ms was drunk

BY IVY BROADHEAD

A disabled man was arrested for being drunk and disorderly, even though he claims he told police officers that his lack of coordination was due to his multiple sclerosis (ms).

Anthony Barkes (right) said officers also asked him to walk in a straight line as part of a sobriety test. Mr Barkes was arrested last summer while drinking at a pub in Lowestoft, and then held in a cell overnight.

He claims he told police officers that he had drunk "only two or three pints".

He also claims officers pushed him roughly into the



back of a police van, and even told him to "stop saying you have ms".

Police then charged him with being drunk and disorderly. He faced three court appear-

ances before the Crown Prosecution Service dropped the charges.

Mr Barkes told *DN* he was "pulling his hair out" over the way he was treated, which he said was "absolutely ridiculous".

He said he is accused at least once a year of being drunk, because of his ms, and may now have to start using a walking stick as visible proof of his impairment, even though he can walk unaided.

Mr Barkes made an official complaint to Suffolk police after the incident.

As part of the "local resolution" of his complaint, the force promised to improve training to officers in dealing with people with "coordination disabilities".

But he was told by the Independent Police Complaints Commission that he could not appeal against the outcome of the local resolution because he had failed to lodge the appeal within 28 days.

A Suffolk police spokeswoman said she was unable to comment as the case was with the IPCC.

A Disability Rights Commission spokeswoman said: "This sort of negative treatment impacts on disabled people's confidence or willingness to report as witnesses or victims of crime."

Ashley bill would also help young carers

Lord Ashley's independent living bill would offer new protection to children who care for disabled relatives, thanks to an amendment agreed during its committee stage.

The private member's bill, which is backed by the Disability Rights Commission, aims to eliminate the postcode lottery in the quality of social care for disabled people.

The amendment during the bill's committee stage in the House of Lords in late March means social care agencies would not be able to allow a disabled person to rely on the care and support of a young person if it affected the child's health, well-being, or education and leisure opportunities.

Alex Fox, an assistant director for the Princess Royal Trust for Carers, said: "No parent wants to rely on the care of their child if they have a disability or develop a long-term health condition, but this is an increasing reality for many disabled parents who are refused support until they reach crisis point."

The bill was due to enter the House of Commons to be debated by MPs as *DN* went to press.

Terminally-ill woman drops legal battle

Anti-euthanasia campaigners have welcomed a terminally-ill woman's decision to drop her legal battle to force doctors to end her life.

Kelly Taylor (right, with her husband Richard), from Bristol, wanted doctors to give pain-relieving drugs, which would send her into a coma.

Her "living will" would then prevent doctors from resuscitating her or giving her artifical nutrition or hydration.

Mrs Taylor had asked for an adjournment to her High Court case, as she has now decided to try different forms of pain relief.

She said: "I am still committed to patient choice at the end of life, and I was very disappointed when the adjournment was refused and I was effectively forced to withdraw my case."

Dame Jane Campbell, from the anti-euthanasia campaigning group Not Dead Yet, welcomed Mrs Taylor's decision.

She said she empathised with her situation, but did not agree with her request for help to end her life.

She added: "We firmly believe that with the right support and pain relief, it can be avoided."



Forum 'not run by disabled people'

Campaigners have complained that a national forum set up to give people with learning difficulties a say in government policy is not led by disabled people.

People First (Self Advocacy), a user-led learning difficulties group, said the National Forum for People with Learning Disabilities and its regional branches are controlled by people without learning difficulties.

Andrew Lee, director of People First, also claimed that forum members with learning difficulties carry out mainly non-paid roles, but co-ordinators and support workers without learning difficulties are paid.

He said only those who will have the same support worker for two years may stand for election.

Mr Lee said: "It's the system of election that we are criticising, not the national forum or the London regional forum."

But Karen Flood, co-chair of the national forum, insisted that the forums are user-led and democratically elected.



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Government backtracks on health bill

BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

The government has confirmed that it will try to reverse key changes made to its mental health bill.

During the bill's second reading in the Commons last month, health secretary Patricia Hewitt defended the government's original plans and urged MPs to reverse amendments made in the Lords

The amendments include an assurance that compulsory treatment must have a therapeutic benefit to the patient; that patients with full decision-making ability could not be sectioned against their will; that community treatment orders (CTOs) should only apply to patients with a history of relapse; that renewal of detention must be agreed by a medical practitioner; and that children detained under mental health laws be placed in age-appropriate accommodation.

During the debate, Mrs Hewitt said: "I believe that the bill – or rather the bill as amended in committee, as I hope and intend it will be –

will strike the correct balance between modernising the legislation in line with the development of clinical practice, improving patient safeguards and protecting more people from harm."

But the shadow health secretary, Andrew Lansley MP, argued that the availability of mental health services, and not compulsion, was the most crucial issue to be addressed.

He said: "Compulsion is not the only route to treatment. Thousands of patients will access services without compulsion."

The Mental Health Alliance, a coalition of 80 mental health organisations, has urged service-users across the country to lobby MPs as the bill moves through the Commons.

Andy Bell, chair of the alliance, said: "It would be a disappointment indeed if the government overturned the amendments, given that they make the bill more proportioned and better suited to people's needs."

The bill has entered committee stage, which should conclude this month.

Refusal was 'degrading'

A disabled woman says she was left feeling "humiliated and degraded" after a delivery driver refused to accept her signature for a parcel because she uses her mouth to hold a pen.

Louise Medus (right), from Cheltenham, said the Business Post driver told her that, as she signs with a pen in her mouth, he couldn't accept her signature because she "couldn't sign legibly". He told her that if her personal assistant did not sign for the package instead, he would take it away.

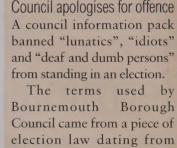
Mrs Medus, who gives disability awareness talks to local schools and colleges, said: "I felt extremely humiliated because my personal assistant is there to help me be independent, not to do things for me that I can do."



After Mrs Medus called Business Post to complain, the driver returned to apologise.

A Business Post spokeswoman said: "Our driver did return the following day to give the customer a heartfelt apology for any distress he may have caused. She assured him she was happy to accept his apology and that it was an end to the matter."

Mrs Medus said she was happy with the man's apology but still wanted an official apology from the company.



In brief

Early screening saves money

Screening newborn babies

for cystic fibrosis (CF) can

make treatment up to five

times cheaper, according to

Universities of East Anglia

and Dundee and the CF Trust

found treatment of children

diagnosed after displaying

clinical symptoms cost 60-

400 per cent more than for

even offset the costs of a

newborn screening pro-

gramme, findings suggested.

Treatment savings may

those diagnosed sooner.

by the

new research.

A report

Bournemouth Borough Council came from a piece of election law dating from 1766 that was used in a pack sent out to candidates. The council has since amended the pack and apologised for any offence caused.

Electoral services officer

Electoral services officer Matt Pitcher said the council treats all people fairly, "whatever their sexual orientation, age, religious belief, disability, gender or race".

Disability no bar to prejudice Disabled people hold the same prejudices against those from other impairment groups as non-disabled people, a study found.

Research from City University in London showed that disabled and non-disabled people held similar feelings about which impairments were most "desirable".

In both cases, deafness came top, with schizophrenia ranked the most "undesirable". Researchers said the prejudices were due to competition over resources, sexual attraction, and stigma.

HIV couple face deportation An HIV-positive Malawian couple and their seven-yearold son faced deportation from the UK, even though doctors feared the boy's mother, who also has epilepsy, could die within a week of returning to Africa.

Following campaigning by Barnardo's, the family won a restraining order, and are seeking a judicial review of the Home Office decision to deport them. Campaigners fear the boy would have to watch his parents die if they were returned to Malawi, because of the lack of treatment for HIV/AIDs.



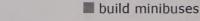
Clubbing together: Members of the Y02 youth club for disabled people celebrate winning an award for innovative use of government funding. The prize money from the Actions Speak Louder... awards last month will be used to extend club services to benefit more disabled young people in Tiverton, Devon.

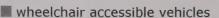
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New workers to reap benefits

BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

Disabled people will be able to earn more money while moving from benefits into work, the government has announced.

New regulations will mean that anyone claiming employment and support allowance (ESA), the new benefit set to replace incapacity benefit (IB) from 2008, will be able to earn up to £86 a week for up to a year without it affecting their benefits.

Currently, a person on IB

who is also claiming meanstested income support can only earn £20 a week before it affects their level of benefits.

Jim Murphy, minister for work and welfare reform, said: "All the evidence we have gathered shows that allowing people to try out part-time job options provides a gateway into the world of work, helping them to build up their skills and confidence and vastly improves the chances they have of getting off benefit altogether."

Paul Treloar, director of policy and services for Disability Alliance (DA), said the new rule was "very good news".

"This will mean people will not be penalised for trying out work. It will act as a real incentive for people who say they want to make the first step back into the workplace."

But he said DA would also like to see the rule extended so that some disabled people could earn up to £86 a week and keep their benefits indefinitely.

Bob Grove, director of the Sainsbury's Centre for Mental Health employment programme, added: "Enabling people to earn up to £86 will free them to try out work and to be rewarded for their efforts without taking the massive risk of losing their benefits."

The welfare reform bill is expected to be given royal assent after a final reading in the Commons, which was due to take place after *DN* went to press.

Public bodies fail to follow equality rules

Scores of public sector organisations could face legal action after failing to produce evidence of a disability equality scheme, according to the Disability Rights Commission (DRC).

Public bodies were required to publish a scheme by last December, with an action plan for stamping out discrimination.

In December, an audit for the government's Office for Disability Issues found many local councils, health trusts, colleges, universities, museums and fire services had failed to do so.

The ODI passed the results to the DRC, which wrote in early March to those which had not yet published a scheme.

By the end of March, 65 public bodies had still not provided evidence of a scheme.

Sir Bert Massie, chairman of the DRC, said: "I'm really pleased that the public sector as a whole has done a great job in responding to the requirements of the duty, with more than 96 per cent of organisations producing a scheme.

"The question is: why have a small minority failed to do so?

"We'll now be considering issuing compliance notices to offending authorities, which could lead to court action."

MPs' protection call

A parliamentary committee has called on the government to bring in new laws to offer greater Human Rights Act (HRA) protection to disabled and other "vulnerable" people who use public services such as residential care.

The joint committee on human rights (JCHR) said the act failed to protect people using public services provided by private and voluntary organisations following privatisation or the contracting out of services.

In one such case, the Court of Appeal rejected the claim of four older, disabled care home residents that the decision to place them in privately-run homes would strip them of protection under the HRA (DN, March 2007, page 5). The four have been given leave to

appeal to the House of Lords. The committee said the courts have interpreted the meaning of the HRA more narrowly than originally intended by parliament, and the law had developed "entirely at odds" with the government's aim of protecting the public through the act.

Andrew Dismore, chair of the committee, said he would also bring forward his own private member's bill on the issue, which he hoped the government would support.

A Department of Health spokeswoman said: "We are still considering this issue in the context of the Discrimination Law Review being undertaken by the government. Until this is completed we wouldn't consider whether there was a need for legislation or not."



Ed start: Ed Balls, economic secretary to the treasury, with fouryear-old Robyn Herbert at the launch of a new pilot initiative to enhance wheelchair services for disabled children. The scheme, run by Whizz-Kidz and Tower Hamlets PCT in London, is the first partnership of its kind between a charity and local statutory service.

Media bias highlighted

Nine out of 10 disabled journalists think disability is represented unfairly in the media, according to a new survey.

The survey, carried out by the disabled members council (DMC) of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), also concluded that nearly one third of the NUJ's disabled members had been unemployed for over 12 months.

DMC chair Stephen Brookes said: "This is a serious problem which shows that the lack of disability representation and journalism in newsrooms will do little to improve society's understanding of disability."

All 35,000 NUJ members were asked to participate in the survey, and nearly one third responded, including more than 400 disabled journalists.

The NUJ is hoping to work with other unions and media organisations to create a good practice guide on the employment of disabled journalists.



NHS trust warned over care

BY PAUL CARTER

An NHS Trust has been threatened with prosecution unless it "dramatically improves" standards in the care homes it runs for people with learning difficulties.

The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) issued the warning to Bedfordshire and Luton Mental Health and Social Care Partnership NHS Trust (BLPT) after it discovered standards in nearly all the care homes run by the trust fell well short of national minimum standards. Areas criticised included training, use of control and restraint, and policies on reporting alleged abuse.

Mike Rourke, CSCI's direc-

tor of inspection, regulation and review, said: "Clearly this is unacceptable. We are talking about people with learning disabilities who deserve much better from those who are charged with providing them with care."

He said the commission would continue to carry out frequent inspections, and use its enforcement powers, including prosecution, if neces-

The CSCI warning came after two inquiries in the last year reported on poor care at NHS facilities for people with learning difficulties, in Cornwall, and in Sutton and Merton.

Anti-abuse charities welcomed CSCI's threat of action, but expressed disappointment that people with learning difficulties were once again being

Richard Curen, director of Respond, said he was concerned that issues such as "inadequate training and inappropriate methods of control and restraint...keep coming up".

BLPT said many of the problems had already been addressed, and it had provided "substantial funding" for improvements.

The commission's warning came days before the parliamentary joint committee on human rights announced an inquiry into the human rights of adults with learning

The state of Where's Where's my book

Reading rights: Blind and partially-sighted children lobby Westminster in an RNIB protest at the lack of children's books in accessible formats. The RNIB wants the government to set up a co-ordinated system to provide accessible schoolbooks.

North left out of scheme

Disabled people in the north of England are being excluded from a scheme which would allow them to part-buy property on the open market, a disabled man has claimed.

When Ian Holt inquired into the HOLD (Home Ownership for people with Long-Term Disabilities) scheme in his area, he was told no housing association in his area was taking part.

Mr Holt owns his own home in Blackpool, but it is no longer suitable for his needs because of an impairment. Mr Holt, who is 86 and unable to work, says the value of his current home does not allow him to buy a suitable property on the open market.

The HOLD scheme was launched by the Housing Corporation last year for disabled people unable to find adequate social housing. It allows a disabled person to buy up to 75 per cent of a property and pay rent on the remaining share, which is financed by a housing association.

A spokeswoman the Housing Corporation said the scheme was only delivered to certain regions due to lack of specialist providers in the north of England. She said there were no plans to extend the scheme.

'Double discrimination' for black boys with autism

Autistic children from black and minority ethnic groups face "double discrimination", according to a new report*.

The research, published last month by the National Autistic Society (NAS), shows parents of autistic children in black and minority ethnic (BME) groups are less satisfied with their child's education than white

parents. The report finds that 62 per cent of parents from BME communities say they did not have a choice in the school their child attended, while 78 per cent feel that the local education authority had not given them sufficient support.

Joan Nelson, the mother of a black child with autism, said: "Black boys are penalised on several fronts; because their special educational needs cause them to have difficulty accessing appropriate education, because they are black, and because they are boys."

*Missing out? Autism, education and ethnicity: the reality for families today; for a copy, tel: 020 7903 3595, or visit www.nas.org.uk

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BY PAUL CARTER

A new European Union directive that threatened to devastate the wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) industry and send prices soaring has been amended after pressure from its trade body.

The directive had contained proposals to cut the number of each type of WAV a company could produce under the Low Volume Type Approval scheme from 500 to 75, making the process uneconomical (DN, August, page 6). It costs more than £35,000 to secure LVTA.

But after the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Converters Association (WAVCA) lobbied the Department for Transport and the European Union, the

directive was amended to create a class of their own for WAVs, with no limit on volume.

Linda Ling, chair of WAVCA, said she was "delighted" the limit had been removed, saying the original draft would have forced companies out of business.

She said: "We've achieved more than we could have hoped for, in as much as we have saved the industry, and also we've put in some provisions to make sure that the industry takes more responsibility for what it's doing with vehicle conversions that will make the products much safer for the end users."

The second reading of the directive takes place on 9 May, with the vote taking place the following day.



History at your fingertips: Naomi Piatt tries out a tactile model of Thornton Abbey in Lincolnshire. The prototype would allow visually-impaired people to experience the abbey's architecture through touch. English Heritage is considering making such detailed models available at Thornton Abbey and other sites.

HIV services 'chaotic'

Services for people with HIV in Britain are "crumbling", according to a new report.

The report*, launched by the AIDS Funders' Forum, a group of HIV charities, says "neglect and complacency" in the commissioning of services has created a "chaotic and fragmented system".

It says services are "almost invisible" in local funding priorities, are out-of-date and do not reflect the changes over the last ten years, with drugs now available that keep people with HIV alive longer. The report also raises concerns that there are not enough services for Africans, asylum-seekers, children and young people.

One service provider said: "The support infrastructure for HIV services is crumbling very fast. There is unsaid complacency, which you can almost feel, that people think that HIV is not a problem anymore."

A Department of Health (DoH) spokeswoman said it had been implementing the first ever national strategy for sexual health and HIV since 2001, had endorsed standards for HIV and reviewed

ring-fenced AIDS support grant to local authorities to reflect the needs of women and children.

She said the DoH had also funded clinical networks for HIV paediatric services and increased funding for national HIV health promotion for gay men and African communities.

*The growing challenge: a strategic review of HIV social care, support and information services across the UK; for a copy, visit www.nat.org.uk

Industry 'saved' Dyslexia is often hidden at work

Almost half of people with dyslexia hide their condition from their employers, according to a new report.

A quarter of those who replied to the survey said they thought being open about their dyslexia would affect how they were perceived at work.

The survey, conducted by Business Link for London (BLL) for the British Dyslexia Association (BDA), also found that nine per cent of people with dyslexia felt fewer opportunities would be open to them if they informed their employers about their condition.

Keith Gilbey, BLL director of strategy, said: "Employers need to create a supportive environment so that they can harness the skills that dyslexics typically possess."

Vicki McNicol, BDA director of development, said: "At the BDA we find that many highly intelligent dyslexic individuals fail to reach their full potential due to ignorance and lack of understanding amongst employers and human resources professionals."

Short break schemes hit by falls in volunteers

The number of people volunteering to be short break carers has fallen in more areas than it has risen over the last eight years, according to a national survey*.

More than a third of short break schemes surveyed by the Shared Care Network (SCN) said the number of volunteers had fallen since the last survey in 1999, while only 27 per cent reported an increase.

SCN said about 10,500 disabled children received short breaks, but another 3,500 were still waiting to be linked to a volunteer carer.

The level of unmet demand is even greater than these figures, as most short break schemes remove children from their lists when they are unable to provide a service.

Vicky Jones, chief executive of SCN, said: "Short breaks are the support service most frequently requested by the parents of disabled children."

*Creative responses to changing needs - the fourth national survey of short break services for disabled children in the UK; for a copy, tel: 01179 415361 or for a summary, visit www.sharedcarenetwork.org.uk



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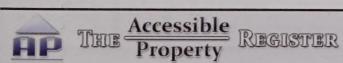


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DRC criticises commission

BY IVY BROADHEAD

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has criticised a government body that ignored disabled people in a call for more local councillors from under-represented groups*.

The Commission on Local Councillors will examine how to increase representation of black and minority ethnic (BME) people, young people, and women. But it failed to make any reference to disabled people when announcing its call for evidence in April.

A DRC spokesman said it seemed that disabled people had been an "afterthought" in the call for evidence.

DRC research soon to be released shows that the number of disabled councillors has fallen by two per cent over the last year.

"If you haven't got people in positions of authority, you aren't going to get adequate representation," he said.

A spokesman for the Department for Communities and Local Government, which is responsible for the commission, accepted that disabled people were also under-represented. But he could not explain why they were not mentioned.

He said the commission would be looking "across the board" at improving representation

*To take part, tel: 020 7944 5945, or write to: Councillors Commission, Community Empowerment Division, Communities and Local Government, 5/G9, Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU, or visit www.communities.gov.uk/councillorscommission

GORSAF BLEIDLEISIO POLLING STATION

Survey looks for step change

Out of reach: A remote polling station inside a caravan in the 2003 Welsh Assembly elections

The above caravan in rural Wales

was just one of the inaccessible

polling stations encountered by

Polls Apart in the last Welsh

Assembly elections on 3 May

are being asked to take part in

a survey into how accessible

disabled and non-disabled people

is part of its campaign to make

Scope's Polls Apart survey of

The Polls Apart survey at the

they find the voting system.

democracy more accessible.

Voters at the Welsh

Assembly elections in 2003.

Scottish and Welsh equality plea

A manifesto from Disability Agenda Scotland (DAS), launched in March, and a guide from Disability Wales, both call for the support and access needs of disabled people to be met in areas such as healthcare, education, housing and employment.

A proportion of all new

housing should be accessible, and there should be better disability equality training for public sector staff, according to the two documents.

The Scottish manifesto also calls for more advocacy and information in alternative formats for disabled people.

Alan Dickson, convenor of DAS, a coalition including Capability Scotland and ENABLE Scotland, said disabled people were simply asking for "equality".

He said: "Education, friendships, relationships and employment, to live in and be part of their community and to enjoy good health. It's not a lot to ask."

Meanwhile, the Coalition on Charging Cymru, which covers older and disabled people's organisations in Wales, has renewed its call for free domiciliary care for older and disabled people.

Capability Scotland has also launched a website* providing information for disabled people on voting in the Scottish election.

*www.vote.org.uk

last assembly elections in 2003 found that 77 per cent of polling stations had one or more access barriers.

"Our bottom line is that disabled people should be able to vote independently and in secret like everyone else," said Ruth Scott, head of policy and government affairs at Scope.

* The Polls Apart survey is available in alternative formats. To request a copy, visit www.pollsapartcymru.org.uk, or tel: 02920 662406

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MPs target bullies

BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

The bullying of disabled pupils should be tackled with robust action from government and schools, a group of MPs has declared

A report* from the education and skills select committee, published in March, concluded that anti-bullying policies in schools should include specific guidance regarding students with special educational needs (SEN).

The committee called for the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to commission new research on SEN-related bullying and its impact, leading to improved guidance for schools.

The report also said schools

should record incidents of bullying and have stronger complaints procedures.

And it called for local authorities to provide improved training for teachers and school staff.

Learning difficulties charity Mencap and the National Autistic Society welcomed the report in light of their statistics showing high levels of bullying of disabled children.

Tara Flood, director of the Alliance for Inclusive Education, said any future action to squash bullying must focus on making mainstream schools more inclusive, promote a "philosophy of diversity", and change attitudes towards disabled pupils.

She said: "What is important is that it is not just about punish-

ment – it is about changing the ethos of the school."

She said the new disability equality duty means schools should include anti-bullying strategies for disabled pupils within their equality schemes.

A DfES spokeswoman said new anti-bullying guidance would be developed for schools with students with SEN.

She said: "We support a zero tolerance approach to all forms of bullying in schools and we recognise that prejudice-driven bullying, for example on the grounds of disability, is particularly insidious."

*Bullying: Third Report from Session 2006-07. For a copy, tel: 020 7219 6181 or visit www.parliament.uk



Have a nice day: Actor Russell Ramsey stars in a new advert produced by the Disability Rights Commission to highlight the daily abuse and bullying endured by people with learning difficulties. The ad, Nice Day, screened in 245 cinemas between 30 March and 5 April.

Young people face huge gap

There is a "daunting discrepancy" between the services needed for young people with mental health problems and those available, according to a new report*.

The report by the charity YoungMinds shows that mental health service providers face increasing numbers of referrals, more severe and complex cases, and long waiting times.

Lee Miller, training and consultancy manager for YoungMinds, said there had been "definite improvements" in certain parts of the country.

But he added: "It is of utmost importance that local, dedicated young people's services will prioritise preventative measures."

The report highlighted a national shortfall in expertise and resources, and low staff morale. It also showed that children and young people prefer informal services that avoid the "mental health" label.

*Guide to Developing Comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services; for a copy, visit www.youngminds.org.uk/training

Diabetes no bar to fire service

Diabetes is no longer a barrier to a successful career in the fire service, according to new research*.

Four out of five service staff who took part did not feel they had been discriminated against because of their diabetes, a report by Diabetes UK found.

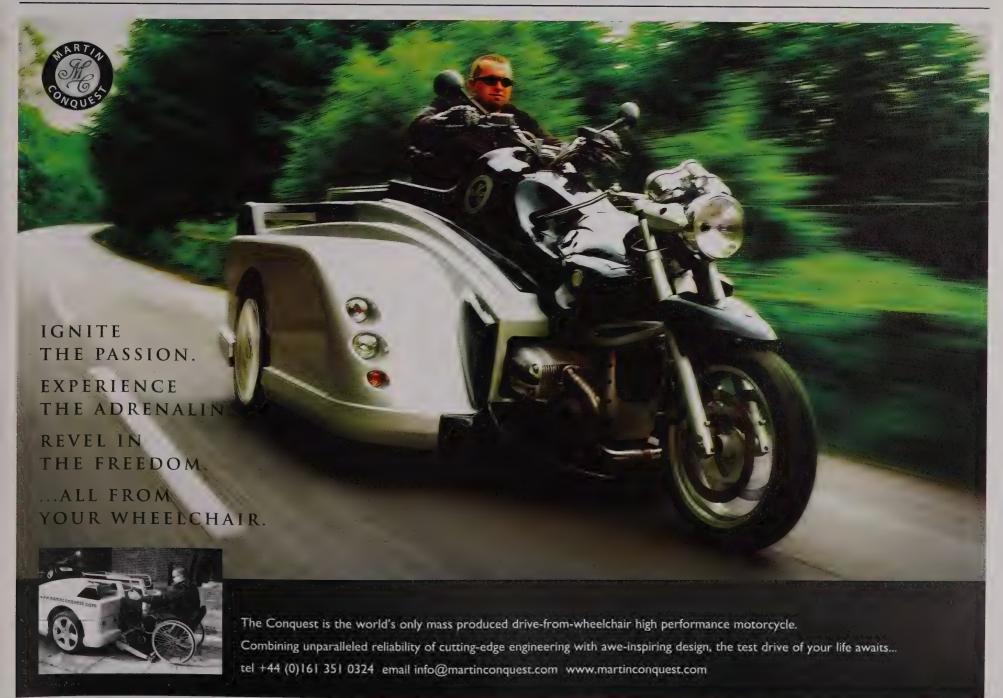
And three-quarters of those who took part felt they had been treated positively after informing employers about their condition.

But issues that still need to be addressed include confusion around driving guidelines and the length of time taken to individually assess firefighters.

The Disability Discrimination Act was extended to cover the emergency services in October 2004.

Director of care, information and advocacy services at Diabetes UK, Simon O'Neill, said: "There is no reason why firefighters and control staff with well-controlled diabetes should not be able to carry out their duties."

*The Diabetes and the Fire Service Survey Report; for a copy, visit www.diabetes.org.uk



Convention is 'roadmap' to equality









Historic: Clockwise from top left: David Bourroughs, fundraising assistant at Scope, Gary Powell, specialist coordinator at the Equalities National Council, and campaigner Rachel Hurst, are freed from a cage representing barriers; Zara Todd, a member of the Equality 2025 network, exchanges views with Paralympian Ade Adepitan; Dame Jane Campbell looks on as Anne Pridmore, chair of the UK Disabled People's Council, Cherie Booth QC and Rachel Hurst cut the equality cake; Cherie Booth QC addresses the event in London

BY PAUL CARTER

A cold and rainy March day did not deter campaigners and leading figures from the human rights and disability movement from packing into a conference centre in London to celebrate the signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The celebrations, organised by Scope with the United Kingdom's Disabled People's Council and the Disability Rights Commission, were also dampened, though, by the news that the UK had refused to sign a vital part of the treaty that would help disabled people challenge the government if it failed to meet its convention obligations. The convention – the first human rights treaty of the 21st century – was signed in New York on behalf of the UK government by Anne McGuire, minister for disabled people.

The purpose of the convention is to "promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and

fundamental freedoms by all disabled people so they can fully participate in society".

Earlier in the day in Soho Square in central London, Rachel Hurst, a leading disability rights campaigner, was "freed" from a cage representing the barriers and prejudices faced by disabled people, to raise awareness of the signing of the convention.

She said the convention was "really something to celebrate" and showed how states "can fully include us as equally participating citizens regardless of our impairments".

She said: "The convention states very clearly that it's not our impairments that are the problem, but the negative barriers and attitudes of people, systems and services. The convention states that disabled people are full people."

Dr Richard Light, an independent consultant who was part of the UK delegation that negotiated the text of the convention, called it an "outstanding testament to the patience, persistence, commitment and capacity of disabled people".

But he warned that the government's signing of the convention was merely a promise to ratify it into law at some point in the future.

He said: "Disabled people around the world have been victim to so many broken promises. We cannot allow today to become yet more empty rhetoric."

Sir Bert Massie, chairman of the Disability Rights Commission, called on the government to use the convention to put pressure on the EU to end human rights abuses against disabled people, such as those living in "appalling institutionalised conditions" in countries such as Bulgaria and Romania.

He said: "Adoption of the UN Convention is the most important international development for disabled people for decades."

Meanwhile, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) admitted the UK government was not among the 45 states that have signed up to the convention's optional protocol, which would allow individual citizens to petition the treaty's monitoring body once all domestic remedies have been exhausted.

A DWP spokeswoman said there were still uncertainties as to how this area would be enforced, and while the UK did not sign the optional protocol on 30 March, it would keep its position "under review" as part of the work being done to enable the UK to ratify the convention.

Yannis Vardakastanis, president of the European Disability Forum, described the failure of the UK, France and Denmark to sign the protocol as "shocking and difficult to understand".

And Andy Rickell, a Scope executive director, said: "We urge the UK government to work with other European member states to resolve the grey areas over the legal implications of this convention, without delay.

"We hope Britain will be at the forefront of moves to ratify both the convention and protocol, which both have the potential to make a real and lasting difference to the rights of disabled people across Europe."

Cherie Booth QC, a patron of Scope and a leading human rights lawyer, addressed the audience at the celebration and said campaigners now had to make sure that all the governments who signed the convention "lived up to their responsibilities".

She said: "We've got to turn these rights into reality. We've got a framework in place now, a roadmap if you like, but we have to make sure that that's not just something that looks very nice on the wall or in the history books. We have to make sure it means something to individual disabled people in their everyday lives."

And Ade Adepitan, Paralympic athlete and television presenter, said: "I think it's an important day. It's something that should have happened years ago. I think this is a great stepping stone and it's something that's a mandate for the people at the top saying 'we disagree with discrimination against people with disabilities'."



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Diabetes targets met

BY SUNIL PECK

The NHS is meeting government targets for diabetes checkups, a Healthcare Commission survey has found.

The survey included questions on diagnosis, check-ups, tests, self-management, psychological support, education, information and training.

Almost all the patients who took part said they had an annual check-up to assess their condition.

Most of them also said they had been tested for complications, including blood pressure (98 per cent), blood glucose levels (91 per cent), weight (91 per cent), and cholesterol levels (89 per cent).

But the commission also found that only 11 per cent of those surveyed had attended an education course on diabetes.

And it found that 17 per cent did not know if they had type one or type two diabetes, and that more could be done to improve the care that people with diabetes receive while in hospital.

Penny Mordaunt, director of strategy, policy and partnerships at Diabetes UK, said: "Diabetes UK is extremely pleased that such a high percentage of people with diabetes are receiving an annual check up."

She added: "Diabetes UK is also concerned about the problems found with inpatient care, as people with diabetes spend 1.1 million days per year in hospital for in-patient care and complications.

"Tackling these problems should be seen as a priority for specialist services to improve life for those in hospital and reduce the high costs associated with their care."

The findings of the survey have been sent to all primary care trusts (PCTs) to enable them to identify areas in need of improvement.



Street protest: Jean Murphy, centre, outside Downing Street in January

Epilepsy measures under fire

The mother of a teenager with epilepsy who died after an ambulance arrived without a paramedic to give her medication that might have saved her life, has criticised new London Ambulance Service policies.

The trust has put procedures in place to ensure control room staff always try to send a paramedic to people having a prolonged epileptic seizure. The new procedures came in following a review by the trust into the death of Kayleigh Macilwraith-Christie last year.

But Jean Murphy, Kayleigh's mother, said: "I don't think they should wait for status epilepticus [prolonged, or a series of, seizures] because that is what my daughter died of. As soon as they have heard that someone is having a fit, I think that they should send an ambulance [with a paramedic]."

£45m for new research

Disability groups have welcomed government funding of £45 million for 29 research programmes into conditions including diabetes, stroke, and dementia.

It is hoped the research will lead to better management and treatment of these conditions, and help prevent the onset of ill-health.

Health minister Rosie Winterton said: "This significant new research funding stream, which will be worth up to £75 million each year when fully established, provides a

marvellous opportunity for the NHS to carry out research that will lead to improved health care or better health care delivery in the near future."

Joe Korner, director of communications at The Stroke Association, said: "We warmly welcome this funding initiative from the Department of Health and hope that it will go some way to help the estimated 150,000 people that have a stroke in the UK each year."

Dr Iain Frame, research manager at Diabetes UK, said: "Five of the 29 projects funded through this initiative are directly related to diabetes.

"We hope that the outcomes from these substantial and important grants will complement the work we are funding through our own research programmes to improve the lives of people with diabetes."

Neil Hunt, chief executive of the Alzheimer's Society, said the money was "very good news" but that the UK had a "lamentable record on publicly-funded dementia research".

Census highlights bias

People from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups are three times more likely than average to be admitted to mental health hospitals, according to a national census.

It is the second year that the Count Me In census has shown higher rates of admission and detention among black and minority ethnic groups. The census gave figures for numbers of in-patients in mental health and learning difficulty services in England and Wales on one day, and aimed to encourage service providers to monitor data on the ethnic groups of patients.

Paul Farmer, chief executive of

the mental health charity Mind, said: "The government's mental health bill is set to make things worse. Ministers have refused to ensure that the bill will be applied in a non-discriminatory, 'race-neutral' way. They continue to resist calls for a statement of principles with the bill, including a principle of equality."

Paul Jenkins, chief executive of the mental health charity Rethink, said: "For the situation to improve, we need so-called 'P45' targets, which can mean people lose jobs if targets are not met. Crucially, we need a mental health bill that doesn't make a worrying situation worse."

Alzheimer's ruling challenged

A ruling which denies people in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease certain drugs on the NHS is to be challenged in the High Court.

Last November, the NHS drugs watchdog, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) ruled that donepezil, rivastigmine and galantamine, should only be prescribed to people in the "moderate" stages of dementia.

Two drugs companies, Eisai and Pfizer, have been granted permission for a judicial review of the NICE decision. The Alzheimer's Society will give evidence during the case.

The charity's chief executive, Neil Hunt, said: "Denying people in the early stages of this debilitating disease access to drug treatments is cruel and unethical. Our legal team will also demonstrate that the decision is fundamentally flawed."

Andrew Dillon, chief executive of NICE, said: "The reality is that, for Alzheimer's disease, drugs are only part of the care that needs to be offered.

"Non-drug interventions have an important part to play... drugs are simply not effective for some patients."



Long career over



BY PAUL CARTER

Paralympic swimmer Giles Long has announced he is retiring from international competition.

London-based Long, 30, won three Paralympic gold medals in a career spanning 13 years, as well as setting the world record for 100m butterfly in the Sydney Paralympics in 2000.

He said: "I went to the world championships in December and it was the first major international that I have been to and came away without a medal. That made me think now was time to retire."

Phil Lane, chief executive of British Paralympic

Association, said: "Giles' decision to retire from elite sport demonstrates how competitive the Paralympic Games are but we hope he continues to contribute to sport in the UK and we wish him all the best for the future."

Long, who was awarded the MBE in 2006, will concentrate on motivational speaking work and looking for new challenges

He said: "At the moment I'm just going to take a bit of a step back but in the future I may look at getting involved in coaching.

"I'm particularly interested in coaching at the grass-roots level as the most important thing is to get the skills right when you are young."

place last month in Boca



Ball rolling: From left, Joyce Cook, vice chairman of the National Association of Disabled Supporters (NADS), Phil Downs, NADS chairman, and Warner Duff, Ipswich Town's disability liaison officer

Relaunched campaign aims to score on access

A relaunched campaign aims to promote disability awareness within the world of football.

The Level Playing Field campaign, run by The National Association of Disabled Supporters (NADS), in partnership with Scope, was relaunched at the new Wembley Stadium on 4 April.

The campaign, which has the backing of all the major football leagues in England, aims to improve disabled people's access to stadiums, as well as tackling wider issues such as staff attitudes, ticketing and transport.

Phil Downs, chair of NADS, said: "Where Scope covers the broad spectrum of disability, NADS is more focused on the ways in which disabled people

can get the most out of football and other events, either as spectators or participants. This symbiosis will provide a combination of size and strength together with an expertise that is hard to find elsewhere."

Richard Caborn, minister for sport, said the campaign was making "real progress" in the quality of facilities and services for disabled supporters.

He said: "The Level Playing Field campaign is helping to ensure that football clubs throughout the country recognise the needs of their disabled supporters and have the proper facilities in place for them to enjoy their match-day experience."

See feature, pages 26-27

Big five make US finals

Britain's wheelchair tennis players reached the finals of four events at the Florida Open Wheelchair Tennis Championships.

After narrowly missing out on a place in the quad main draw, former national champion Jamie Burdekin (right) added to his second draw title at October's US Open by defeating third seed Pablo Araya of Chile 6-4, 6-4.

Meanwhile, world number one quad Peter Norfolk was defeated in the final of the main draw singles by American David Wagner.

World number two Wagner, runner-up to Norfolk in the last three finals, came back from a set down to take the title 4-6,

And 14-year-old Jordanne Whiley also had to settle for the runner-up spot in the junior girls singles after going down to 17-year-old German Katharina

Meanwhile, David Phillipson, from Nottinghamshire, and Somerset's Shaun Regan were beaten in the men's second draw doubles final by US top seeds Anthony Lara and John Becker.

The championships took

disabilitynow



Archers win string of medals

Britain's Paralympic archers won gold, silver and bronze medals at the Arizona Cup in the United States.

The women's Paralympic compound team of Pippa Britton, Mel Clarke and Danielle Brown won the gold medal, beating Mexico's nondisabled team in the final by eight points.

Paralympic champion John Cavanagh, and team-mates John Stubbs and Fred Stevens, could not repeat the women's result, and took silver after going down to the Mexican team by 22 points.

The women's recurve team took the bronze medal.

Tim Hazell, Grand National Archery Society Paralympic coach, said: "It's been a terrific week, and for our Paralympians to hold their own against the best in the world - Paralympic and ablebodied - is a tribute to all of them."



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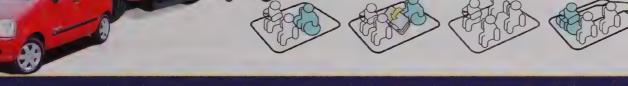




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years of Labour

en years ago, Tony Blair's "New Labour" swept to power with a landslide victory. Their 1997 manifesto made more than 200 election pledges, but the only explicit mention of disabled people was promised support for "comprehensive, enforceable civil rights for disabled people". Ten years on, has Labour delivered the goods? In a special four-page news focus, *DN* talks to Labour's disabled people's minister, Anne McGuire, about her party's record. We ask five disabled people and a carer for their assessments. And we ask whether Labour has performed on *DN*'s campaigns, and put its performance in one crucial area – education – under the spotlight.



Pointing the way: Anne McGuire in March 2006 at the launch of RADAR's guide to help MPs better understand disability issues.

'Disabled people at core of change'

The minister for disabled people, Anne McGuire, tells Elizabeth Choppin that Labour still has a long way to go before disabled people achieve true equality

en years after Labour came to power, Anne McGuire, minister for disabled people since 2005, is realistic about the long road ahead towards achieving equality for disabled people.

"Our aims and objectives when we came into government were to securely anchor equality for disabled people within our government policy, and I think we have come a long way to seeing that ambition fulfilled," she says, as she talks to *DN* in her office in Whitehall. "But we're not complacent."

She says Labour has pushed through a more robust Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and created the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) to enforce it and oversee progress towards equality for disabled people – a need identified by the government's Disability Rights Task Force.

"We were determined when we came into power to actually beef up and strengthen that DDA (1995). I think most people recognise that it was put onto the statute book in the face of quite bitter opposition by some members of the then government – and credit to those other members of the Conservative government who used their clout to get it through with our support," she says.

"But we also knew that act was a piece of legislation that had no enforcement powers."

Despite criticisms that the

DDA does not have enough bite and many organisations are still not complying with its regulations, Mrs McGuire says achieving equal rights will be a long process, and the DDA is only "part of the jigsaw".

She says questions or criticisms of the DRC on how it is enforcing the legislation should be taken up with the DRC itself, as it was set up as an independent body.

"These are matters for the DRC," she says. "You can't give an organisation responsibility for doing something and then tell them how to do it.

"The DRC has more responsibilities than just enforcing the DDA...but I think there have been some excellent

cases where the DRC has decided that 'this is an issue that we want to highlight'."

What needs to be achieved, she stresses, is a "change of culture" – and that will take time and involve complex strategies.

The Office of Disability Issues (ODI), formed last year, has set out a timeline for how this might happen, with its new panel of disabled people, Equality 2025 – which aims to secure equal rights for disabled people by 2025.

The panel will consult with policy-makers on how to implement the recommendations in the report of the Prime Minister's strategy unit – Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People.

A "cooperative approach" and asking disabled people what works best will be the core principles for change, Mrs McGuire says.

"The days of the 'Talk Down Approach' are finished," she adds. "Disabled people know what is best for themselves in terms of how policy is developed and how services are delivered, and I think that is what should underpin all our work for the next 10 years or so.

"The Life Chances report has been a real catalyst in encouraging government departments to work together. There is a real recognition now that we can't continue to work in our silos in the way perhaps we did before. Disabled people don't live their lives in silos."

However, research has shown that many disabled people do still live in poverty. Feedback from *DN* readers has shown that many people cannot afford to heat their homes and barely scrape by. Mrs McGuire insists that disability living allowance takes extra costs into account and that the government is doing everything possible to eradicate poverty – especially for disabled children.

"There are various aspects to the issue," she claims.
"Many disabled people will tell you that one of the routes out of poverty is moving into work, and that's why a welfare reform bill is currently going

through parliament and why we have looked at the ways we can support disabled people into work, recognising that there will be some disabled people who cannot work."

Yet many disability organisations and individuals fear the government's welfare reform plans, which are due to pass through parliament this summer, will come at the expense of meeting people's own financial needs.

"We estimate that about 70 per cent of people who are currently on incapacity benefit and say they want to work could, given the right circumstances, move into work. That's why we have things like Access to Work and Pathways [to Work] and disability employment advisors, etc."

But what about those disabled people who say they would benefit from a winter fuel payment? "We don't underestimate the challenge (of poverty), but it's not as easy an issue to solve – it's not just about extra income," she says.

"I know people look to the pensioners' £200 and think that would solve all of their problems, but the structure of the state pension and the DLA is different. DLA does take into account that basket of goods and services and it is annually uprated. At the moment, we are not persuaded that a winter fuel payment is the right way to go. I know that will disappoint some people, but..." she trails off.

Mrs McGuire is hopeful the government will make strides in tackling prejudice against disabled people in the workplace, helping to solve the crisis facing user-led organisations, and promoting independent living.

"We have set ourselves the ambition of true equality for disabled people by 2025. We're starting to see some of the milestones on that road to equality. What I want to see for the next 10 years is that government, in the wider sense, should continue to engage with disabled people."

She adds: "I think we've come a long way since 1997, but we have a long way to go."

Real change or hard Labour?

We asked five disabled people and one carer to assess the achievements and failures of a Labour government, after 10 years in power

THE DISABILITY CHARITY BOSS

Liz Sayce is chief executive of RADAR

Let's celebrate the huge successes of the last 10 years achievements of the movement, government and allies.

In 1997, service providers and schools could discriminate with no come-back. Then came new legal rights - so Bob Ross could successfully challenge the policy that charged him more to travel by air. Lee Buniak's parents successfully challenged Lee's exclusion from important school activities, from the school photo to the nativity play (not to mention learning). And people with learning disabilities challenged a brewery when a pub refused to serve them.

There have been big symbolic policy moves: from minister Anne McGuire signing the first UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to the government removing, in 2005, the requirement on mental health service-users to prove a "clinically well recognised" condition before they could even contemplate a challenge to discrimination under the Disability Discrimination Act.

But celebration should not mean complacency. Individual rights are not enough. They



don't change whole systems. For that, we need investigations into sectors and robust action plans. We need disability thinking planned in to relevant policy development. And we need a broad understanding of who is most excluded - not always those who see themselves as "disabled".

We don't have that yet. Following the DRC's 2006 formal investigation into health inequalities experienced by people with learning disabilities and/or mental health conditions, we have an initial government response – but are still awaiting hard, tangible outcomes like annual health checks and national tracking of who is dying young of preventable illnesses, and why.

On policy, the government's

core goals won't succeed without considering disability at the outset. Take reducing child poverty. A third of children living in poverty have at least one disabled parent yet the 2007 child poverty strategy (Working for Children) includes no clear plans to offer disabled parents integrated support with parenting, childcare, skills and employment; no required links between employment, social care and health services.

Our successes have stemmed from disability leaders both working with the Labour government - and being critical friends. Over the next 10 years, RADAR will support pandisability (and wider) alliances and enable disabled people to hold government to account.

We shall be watching for progress on independent living nationwide; and for our needs to be integrated into work on child poverty, skills, housing, safety from crime - and more using the disability equality duty as a tool to improve our lives. We shall be encouraging new voices in the debate individuals and groups who seek lasting local and national change.

THE ACADEMIC

Dr Paul Darke



As a disabled person, I voted for Labour in 1997, full of hope and expectation.

In reality, I am not sure what that hope and expectation was for: it turns out neither did Labour.

In retrospect, I think what I had hoped for was that Labour would design and implant policies, laws and guidance in the belief that people are "good", or of equal value with one another. It is this positive feeling that Labour has fundamentally betrayed in its time in office.

Labour works on the basis, it seems to me, that one must be protected from people: they are evil, scroungers, taking the state and everyone they know for a ride (including disabled people).

Labour has replaced positivity with misanthropy: mentally ill people need to be locked up; disabled people are getting too much in benefits (and most of them are frauds anyway); Muslims are terrorists; and single mothers are a crime against humanity.

Fear has replaced hope; negativity and ignorance have replaced value and decency.

I wait in the same overcrowded hospital outpatients departments for as long and as pointlessly as ever. I am unwilling to have the operations I need due to the negation of cleanliness that is rampant in hospitals because of the privatisation of cleaning.

I do not doubt that the NHS will remain free at the point of service, but those services will be further

privatised. "High-cost" patients such as myself will be less able to get the services, operations and treatments they need. They will be increasingly put aside and left

As for welfare, Labour has re-instigated a Victorian ethos of philanthropy and charity towards disabled people: getting more and more large (non-disabled-led) charities to take over services, assessments and the provision of expertise.

Disabled people, under Labour, have again become the objects of charity we have spent 100 years trying to get away from.

Labour's crowning glory will be the introduction of "individualised" benefit packages for disabled people. Finally, Labour will put the nail in our coffins of true equality through the rejection of universal rights and benefits.

I have not mentioned the replacement of state and core funding by the begging process that is the Lottery (which always favours the rich with their matching funds anyway); the subsequent closure of many disability organisations; and the widening gap between the valued disabled person and the "bad" cripple.

Disabled people, after 10 years, have lived the disappointment that is Labour: superficial equality on the surface but underneath an attitude that can see the price of everything and the value of nothing; disabled people in particular.

THE MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC

Allan MacKillop is a freelance journalist in Edinburgh

As the words of the song go: "Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer." Well, it's time for this traitor to do a little sneering at how present and everyday culture has adversely affected the lives of disabled people during Labour's tenure.

From my experiences within work and travel, Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) has emerged as the biggest single cultural barrier preventing the present and next generation of disabled people from both gaining high quality employment and access to services.

The problem with BPO is that it reduces the level of internal infrastructure, thereby negating an organisation's ability to offer adequate support to those of us who are physically challenged.

Whether it's losing

wheelchairs in Gatwick airport or adapting premises, disabled people are continuously messed around by the complex relationships created when outsourcing goes mad.

By allowing this culture to be perpetrated throughout business, the Labour government has undermined many of the initiatives created on the back of the DDA.

The solution to this may not be grounded within the DDA itself, but by a return of Labour to some of its more Citizen Smithian values, for example with a renationalisation of the railways.

This might lead to a more positive culture in the private sector and allow some of Labour's employment schemes that are marketed towards disabled people to actually



work. However, I'm not holding my breath, as society no longer produces the strong, radical thinkers capable of really forcing an issue like this.

If Labour is to avoid creating the next generation of so-called "welfare state scroungers", then somebody at Labour HQ needs to find a way to inject some red back into the people's flag pretty damn quick.

THE CAMPAIGNER

Simone Aspis works for the United Kingdom's Disabled People's Council, but this is a personal view

For the first time ever, disabled people have the right for the behaviour associated with their impairments, or health conditions, to be criminalised, thanks to Labour's ASBOs (Anti-Social Behaviour Orders).

Disabled people could soon have greater rights for others to force treatment onto them if their behaviour may create a risk to public safety, through the government's mental health bill.

And for disabled people who are unable to make their own decisions, the Mental Capacity Act offers others the right to make decisions on their behalf.

Labour has talked a lot about supporting disabled people's independence.

Good initiatives like individualized budgets, the extension of direct payments and the Independent Living Review have been undermined by tighter eligibility criteria and social services' budget cuts.

While no-one would be against Pathways to Work to support disabled people into work, such a positive initiative will be compromised by benefits sanctions.

Labour has increasingly turned to the voluntary sector for its expertise. Most of the ideas Labour has picked up on have been thanks to disabled people's organisations, which could in the past have expected financial assistance for their



contributions. But with competitive tendering, disabled people's organisations have an increased "right" to go out of existence.

The Human Rights Act itself is a milestone, and has produced some positive results for disabled people using public services. However, due to the increasing contracting out of services and proposed cuts in legal aid budgets, disabled people's human rights will increasingly be undermined. With the Disability Discrimination Act requiring public bodies to promote disability equality, with the proposed signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and a possible overhaul of how to measure disability equality, let's hope Labour will deliver on rights disabled people really do want into the next decade!

THE CARER

Gail Hanrahan has a disabled son

This government has excelled at producing new policies and guidance. But there is a huge discrepancy between what they say should happen and the reality for families like mine.

For years we've said what we need most is a break from caring. Yet respite services are continually targeted for cuts and one in three families saw their short break service cut last year. Now, eight out of 10 families who care for a person with severe or profound learning disabilities say they have reached breaking point.

After more than 10 years of

campaigning, I've watched a service intended to prevent crisis become one that only steps in at breaking point. When my son Guy was younger, we wouldn't have survived without respite care. It kept him at home throughout childhood. He wouldn't be eligible now.

For the last 10 years, this government has stipulated what is needed for families like mine. They have raised expectations about what should be possible for Guy. In spite of the Valuing People white paper, people with learning disabilities remain very low down on anyone's priority



list, and people like Guy, with high support needs, seem to be off the radar altogether.

It's fine to talk of rights, inclusion, equality, and independence, but even toilets for disabled people are not accessible for people like Guy, and thousands of families can't get the right to something as basic as an odd night's sleep.

THE TRADE UNIONIST

Richard Exell is a senior policy officer in the TUC's economic and social affairs department

So much achieved...

In many ways, Britain is much closer to equality than I dared to dream in 1997, but I've learned to recognise how much more there is to that dream.

In 2007, it is easier for disabled people to be open about their impairments and to demand equal rights: the young are much more confident about using the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) to challenge discrimination, and non-disabled people elected a disabled winner of Big Brother.

This is partly a matter of the steady stream of improvements to the DDA - the creation of the Disability Rights Commission, extending rights



to cover small employers and education, and the disability equality duty in the public sector. This government has responded to calls for equal rights, and gone far further than I expected. But ...

There's always a "but", and it is taking a lot longer than I

expected for civil rights to feed through to economic equality. A family with a disabled adult or a disabled child is on average a quarter more likely to be poor, and for a family with a disabled adult and a disabled child the figure is more than two-thirds.

There are only two groups whose job prospects have worsened in the past 30 years: Muslim women and disabled people. A third of employers still illegally discriminate against disabled people.

The government has a good record on rights, but they have still to deliver on jobs and better incomes for disabled people.

Six of the best: New Labour's record on our campaigns

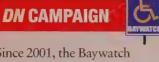
DN CAMPAIGN

DN's campaign to legalise medicinal cannabis began in 1997, just as Labour came to

The drug was reclassified from class B to C in 2004 but remains illegal, with potential 14-year prison sentences for dealing, although there is a "presumption against arrest"

Despite this, disabled people are still facing arrest, prosecution and possible prison sentences for medicinal cannabis-related offences, a situation the MP Paul Flynn has described as "barbaric".

A small number of people can now secure the cannabisbased drug Sativex, but it has still not been licensed in the UK despite weighty evidence that it can help many disabled people.



Since 2001, the Baywatch campaign has been fighting to stamp out the abuse of disabled parking bays, particularly in retail car-parks.

Most of the campaign focus is on companies that run carparks outside their stores, particularly the big four supermarkets - Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Asda and their customers, rather than the government.

DN CAMPAIGN

In December 2003, DN launched its Justice for Survivors campaign to raise the maximum sentence for ill-treating or neglecting people with learning difficulties or mental health problems from two to 10 years.

Labour's Mental Capacity Act raised sentences to five years, thanks in part to lobbying from DN, but only where the victim was "without capacity".

A similar amendment in the mental health bill, which would cover many more cases of abuse, would also extend sentences to five years. The bill is awaiting a second reading.

DN CAMPAIGN



Flight Rights was launched in August 2002 to stop airlines damaging and losing wheelchairs and other essential disability equipment.

In 2003, the Labour government issued a voluntary code for air travel, which includes measures to prevent damage to wheelchairs, and sets standards for airport design and staff training. Four years

on, the code is still voluntary, but a report commissioned by the government has suggested "a strong need for UK regulation".

The Disability Rights Commission has also called for air travel to be brought under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). EU air travel regulations to prevent discrimination will come into force next April.

DN CAMPAIGN

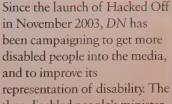


Our campaign to extend winter fuel payments to severely disabled people under 60 has not resulted in any change in government policy since it was launched in 2000.

Many early day motions have called for action and been signed by MPs from across the political spectrum.

And nearly 90 per cent of MPs who are themselves eligible for the payments support extending the benefit, a DN survey revealed. DN also published the first evidence that cold weather kills severely disabled people every winter. The Labour government has refused to change its position.

DN CAMPAIGN



then disabled people's minister, Maria Eagle, backed our campaign in 2004.

She said employing more disabled journalists was "the best way" to change disability representation in the media.

Labour's returns from SENDA

Labour won power in 1997 by focusing on 'education, education'. Sunil Peck fills in its report card ten years on

Since Labour came to power 10 years ago, it has introduced measures aimed at opening more mainstream schools up to disabled pupils – including the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).

But while disability activists say Labour's policies have gone some way to bringing about greater inclusion, they are disappointed the government has not done more.

According to Richard Reiser, director of Disability Equality in Education (DEE), there are many more inclusive schools than 10 years ago, but the drive for inclusion has been hampered by inconsistencies at the heart of government policy.

He says: "There could have been a much greater [overall] improvement if they had stuck to their initial principles of developing the inclusive education system.

"But after 2001, they got derailed by the special school lobby. This has meant that many projects which were underway to develop more inclusive provision have been shelved in the last couple of years."



He adds: "Rather than doing the main job of concentrating on developing the capacity in mainstream schools, they have gone into setting up beacon status for special schools and have developed this idea that you can do inclusion anywhere, including in a separate special school.

"The whole point of inclusion is that you mix with your peers from a whole variety of backgrounds, including non-disabled."

Linda Shaw, co-director of the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE), says the widening of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) to cover education, through SENDA, and the introduction of a legal right to inclusion in mainstream schools, have been "helpful", but she is critical of the government for failing to plan the phasing out of separate "special" schools and ensure a transfer of resources to support development of inclusive mainstream education. In her view, this is a "violation of children's human rights".

Ruth Scott, policy and government affairs manager at Scope, agrees the government has not done enough to accelerate desegregation and inclusive education.

She also says that, over the last six years, there has been a faster annual increase in the number of GCSE grades A-C achieved by disabled people, "although there is still a long way to go".

She was also disappointed by the government's response to the education select committee's report on special educational needs (SEN) last July, which "identified many areas in need of reform".

Beth Reid, policy officer for children at the National Autistic Society (NAS), says there has been "significant" progress for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, with the development of good practice guidance "a very positive development", although the NAS wants it implemented more widely.

'The obsession the government has created around testing has impeded the drive towards inclusion'

Tara Flood, director of the Alliance for Inclusive Education, says the government has not been brave enough to implement SENDA.

This, she says, has forced some parents to send their children to special schools. Like Reiser, she thinks the goal of inclusion has been hampered because the government has been "spooked by the moral panic around special school closures".

She adds: "The obsession that this government has created around testing, with schools competing against each other on impossible league tables, has further impeded the drive towards inclusion; most schools that are very good examples of real inclusion will not be at the top of league tables."

Overall, the experts *DN* spoke to believe Labour has made a small improvement to education for disabled children.

The legislation has been good, but the implementation has fallen somewhat short.

Another positive step has been the government's signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which says countries should ensure an inclusive education at all levels.

But again, the question remains: will it be implemented?

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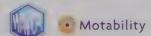
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HOME DEMONSTRATION, NEW, EX-DEMONSTRATOR & SECOND HAND VEHICLES, SHORT AND LONG TERM HIRE

'I say stuff 'em. I'll do



In the fifth part of our poverty investigation, Elizabeth Choppin talks to a Cardiff man about how his battle to care for his family has seen them plunge into debt

ebt. It is one of the nastiest four letter words around.

For Albert Bristol and his family, debt is accepted as part of the "vicious circle" of life. Just as you start to get on top of it, another unforeseen circumstance buries you under a mountain of bills you can't afford to pay.

Albert, 62, who stopped work as a delivery man in the 1980s due to osteoarthritis and cancer, has his wife Rita, 59, and daughter, Nicole, 14, who has Down's syndrome, to look after.

The family live in a fourbedroom council house in Cardiff – the size of which was necessary back when the couple had two other children at home.

Excluding council tax and housing benefit, the family has about £429 a week coming in from disability-related benefits, carer's allowance and tax credits. But repaying bank loans and credit cards, plus regular household costs, means the family only has about £4 left over each week.

Over the years, says Albert, it has been necessary for he and Rita to use credit cards to pay bills, maintain the car and make repairs on the house.

"It accumulates," he says.
"You get into a vicious circle
where you've got to go
shopping, but you go and
check your bank balance and
you haven't got sufficient
funds, so you put it on your
credit card. But there comes a
point when you just have to go
without."

Paying back £753 a month, as he is now, is obviously a great strain on the family – but a necessary one, he insists.

"It's really heavy but I'm trying to get rid of them," he says.

People might jump to criticise the Bristols for letting their spending spiral out of control, but they are not alone in that some disabled people have found that depending on credit cards and bank loans is one of life's stark realities.

Albert says he is sick and tired of waiting for the council to do what it should – and so he doesn't bother asking any more. This is one of the reasons he owes so much money.

For example, last year he was told that, due to high levels of vandalism in the area, insurance for his Motability vehicle could not be continued unless he was able to move his car off the road.

He asked the council to pave a car port for him. He was told that, as a disabled person, he was eligible for this service, free of charge, but that it would be an eight-year wait.

"I was due for another change of car – I had to get it done," says Albert. "That is how they treat disabled people – I'll be entitled in eight years. Eight years! I'll be 70 years of age by then – it won't be any good to me. I'd rather do it myself."

But in order to "do it himself", he had to take out a high-interest loan for £1,400. This is what inevitably happens each time a washing machine stops working, the car needs repairing or the windows in the house need to be replaced.

"I went to three MPs about this drive," he says, heatedly. "They didn't want to know. So, forget it. I'll find the money myself.

"If you want something done, you start going through all the channels, and you keep getting negative returns. You're going to get uptight. You're going to get really down about it. So, why not say, 'Stuff 'em – I'll do it myself'?"

Rita says that in years past, she also got into the bad habit of drawing out cash on her credit card to pay the bills.

"I got myself into a right mess," she says.

It was easy to do, apparently, because Nicole goes through her clothes and

'I'll be entitled in eight years. Eight years! I'll be 70 years of age. It won't be any good to me. I'd rather do it myself'

shoes so quickly. Nicole's fluctuating weight and how quickly she wears clothes out has turned into a considerable expense, says Rita.

The couple have been together 17 years, but have never been out to eat together on their own, or with their daughter.

"If you start doing that — then you've got to find money for it, don't you? If you haven't got it, you can't find it. Simple economics," jokes Albert.

Now and again the family will have a meal out with their grown son – but he always pays.

The only leisure activities the family manage are occasional days out with the help of the Family Fund, a charity for families with disabled children.

Albert pays social services £5 a week to take Nicole on an outing, but other than that, the couple look after her together.

Albert is convinced that if he could get in front of his debt, the family would have a little room to breathe





myself

financially. But something always comes up, he says, and so the cycle continues.

He strongly feels that a person's attitude is a way to cope with less than ideal circumstances - whether one is deeply in debt, as he is, or can't afford to meet their monthly costs.

On the one hand, his family's needs must be met. "If the house is cold, it needs heating. If it needs heating, then I've got to pay. If I've got to pay, I'd better find the money from somewhere."

But on the other hand, he feels that a family has to try to live within its means and focus on the good as opposed to the

"You get a sum of money to live on," he says. "You've got to make the best of what you've got. You can go into a severe depression, you can get fed up. But you've got to make the most of it.

"You carry on to the best of your ability as long as you put your family and your home

'You can go into a severe depression, you can get fed up. But you've got to make the most of it

"You can scream and cry all you like, but at the end of the day if you're getting £200 a week, you're still only going to get £200 - so why bother with all the screaming and shouting?

"I'm a realist. If that's the way it is, well then that's the way it is," he adds.

In wintertime, they cut costs by turning the heating off while Nicole is at school. The winter fuel payment helped when it came through in November, he adds.

The truth is that Albert does not have any faith in his local council, and so has decided to go it alone.

"It's not what you know, it's who you know in this town. If you know the right people to contact, you might get something done. If not, you end up going in circles and no one will do anything."

He is sure that his family will be fine – they will never

"Let's be fair – a bag of potatoes, a loaf of bread, some butter. Chip sandwiches...that puts you above the poverty line. That's seven meals, seven days a week."

Ins and outs

WEEKLY INCOME:

Carer's allowance -£46.95/week DLA (for Albert and Nicole) -£64.50/week (care) *£45/week (mobility, which goes directly for Motability car, so is not included in the total) Incapacity benefit – £78.50/week (£157 fortnightly) Child tax credit — £106/week Tax credits (for both adults) -£134/week

Weekly total: £429.95 (some figures are approximate)

WEEKLY EXPENDITURE:

(some figures are approximate) (Council tax and rent paid by Gas - £20/week Electric - £12.25/week Water - £18/week Mobiles (x2) - £2.50/week BT landline/broadband/cable -£21.25/week Bank loans/credit cards -£188/week Fuel for car — £10/week Car maintenance -£1.40/week TV licence – £2.60/week Social services respite – £5/week Household/clothing for Nicole/food — £115/week Cigarettes - £10/week Home repairs — £10.40/week Life insurance — £1.10/week Newspaper – £3.15/week

Total: £425.65

Haircuts - £5/week

'I'm sick of being made to be a scrounger'

I read with interest April's Poverty Files and all the letters (DN, April, letters, page 34).

It seems to me some people can get a lot of money in benefits fairly easily and live very well, while others are sadly scraping the barrel and fighting every bit of the way to keep what they have. I had to battle for years for what I get at the moment.

I get £740 a month for my partner/carer and myself (income support, plus low-rate care/high-rate mobility). I pay £55 per month for electricity (due to increased prices I'm in debt this quarter), £8.50 water, £20.48 broadband, £25 phone, £52.23 for car insurance, MOT, service and breakdown cover, £10 a month for service and batteries for my wheelchair, £11.25 for the TV licence,

and £10 for a mobile phone.

If I take into account the increase in electricity prices, this leaves £130 a week for two people for food, clothing, additional equipment and dental/optician costs, let alone if anything breaks or needs replacing in the house, or with the car, wheelchair, etc. Everything I buy is second-hand or from auctions, including my wheelchair.

Housing benefit, etc, means rent is covered, but my home is poorly adapted and costs a fortune to heat. I was on the list to move to a bungalow for five years with high priority before I gave up. My partner works very hard looking after me, and what does he get? Nothing.

I have to attend medicals. I have nothing to hide but I totally agree it is a depressing, degrading experience which I can do nothing about and if found fit (which I usually am, as I have a rare genetic disorder) I will lose £40 a week benefits and have the additional cost of signing-on, as I live in rural Dorset.

Yes, I do look for work, as I'm sick of being made to be a scrounger and having to subject myself to scrutiny all the time.

But even this is impossible when going up against ablebodied workers who do not require time off due to health/hospital appointments,

Nothing has changed in real terms. Some get all the help, while others, like Brooke Stevens, fall into despair.

K Francis, Dorset

never quite matched what he needed'

I found the article on the cost of living with disability disturbing, but not just because of the example of such hardship. My real concern was that Milton Keynes appears not to make people aware of direct payments. When my husband needed care I found that what the social workers suggested never quite matched what he needed, particularly because his needs changed very rapidly.

Luckily one of his carers knew about direct payments. I phoned the benefits enquiry line and was told there was no such benefit. Luckily, we have a carers network and I asked them. They told me I needed to get in touch with the social worker. I did this and direct payments were organised.

This enabled me to decide

what help my husband needed within an agreed budget. As an example, at one point it was decided he needed help at meal-times and so three half hours a day were funded.

In fact, I was almost always there to help at lunch-time but had difficulty getting him up in the morning, so I used the money to pay for an hour in the morning rather than lunch. The money can also be used to pay relatives and friends. For example, if a

family member is prepared to come for a weekend and do the caring they can be paid for it. The recipient receives the money and makes the decision to employ the agency and/or person of their choice.

Records do have to be kept, but they are relatively simple.

I really do think knowledge of direct payments ought to be more widely accessible as it would save a lot of difficulty. Eunice Hinds, via email



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The stunning new Wembley Stadium scores heavily on access, says Paul Carter, who also examines access at three other major sporting venues

ootball fan or not, you will have probably found it hard to escape the negative headlines surrounding Wembley Stadium that have been an almost constant feature in newspapers and magazines in recent years.

There has been a constant slew of criticism and vitriol — hardly surprising after the stadium came in almost two years behind schedule and massively over its original budget.

Construction was dogged by everything from building problems to legal rows, via a sniper threat to workmen using cranes.

All in all, it's safe to say that the stadium has had a rough childhood. In fact, hating Wembley has become something of a national sport in itself.

Last month, *DN* was given the opportunity to experience the new facilities for disabled people at Wembley first hand,

at the launch of the National
Association of Disabled
Supporters (NADS)

Level

Playing Field campaign (see page 15).

First things first – the stadium is quite simply stunning. It's fantastic. Critics would argue, though, that being the most expensive stadium ever built anywhere in the world, it should be.

Phil Downs, chair of NADS, says: "I'm pleased to be able to say, having been round this stadium already, this is absolutely spectacular. Our congratulations have got to go to the Wembley team, and everyone else who was involved in it, for such a splendid job that they've done here."

Joyce Cook runs the disabled branch of englandfans, the official England supporters club.

She says: "The Wembley staff have worked with us, and listened to the problems that have been raised. The facilities look as though they will be excellent. Although we expect some teething problems, that's normal, and it looks a very positive stadium for disabled fans."

Wembley has been designated as a "public transport destination", meaning that access is predominantly restricted to public transport, and the stadium is served by three stations –

Wembley Park,

Wembley

Central and Wembley Stadium. Wembley Park is the closest station to the ground, situated at the top of Olympic Way (also known as Wembley Way), approximately 600 metres away.

The station has undergone an extensive refurbishment programme to cope with the expected increase in visitor numbers, and now provides step-free access from both the Jubilee and Metropolitan line platforms to street level.

All ticket counters are also low-level with induction loops fitted.

The walk to the stadium is fairly tiring and is likely to be considerably congested on match or event days, but the impressive sight of the new looming arch is likely to be enough to keep you going.

At the stadium itself, every set of turnstiles has an accessible entrance, so being forced to use a "special" gate should now be a thing of the past.

Once inside, the stadium is spread over five levels, all of which are served by more than 20 accessible lifts and 30 sets of escalators.

Among the 2,618 toilets, the most in any building in the world, are 147 accessible toilets, all locked by a RADAR key.

All of the restaurants, bars and kiosks in the main concourses have induction loops and low-level counter areas, although at £7 for fish and chips and £3.50 a pint, there may not be much business.

NADS was involved in the consultation process when the facilities were being designed, and it is inside the stadium bowl itself that this level of planning behind the facilities really becomes evident.

While no building can ever claim to be inclusive for every impairment, it's fair to say that the new Wembley gives it a good go.

Of the 90,000 capacity, there are 310 "seats" for wheelchair-users – and PAs – which are distributed evenly around the stadium, across each of the five levels, meaning that disabled fans can sit with supporters of the same team, and in the same area as friends or family.

In addition to the spaces for wheelchairs, there are also 100 "enhanced amenity" seats, which have extra room either side for assistance dogs (there are dog toilets at Wembley, too) or mobility aids, and have armrests to aid accessibility.

Those with visual impairments have access to a commentary service via a headset, that is broadcast on a secure frequency licensed to Wembley by OFCOM. The headsets can be used anywhere in the stadium or concourse, so visually impaired supporters are not restricted to certain seats or areas of the ground.

Sadly, though, all is not rosy in the Wembley garden.

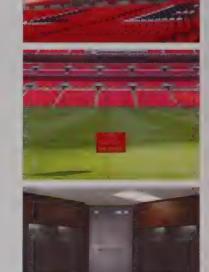
As mentioned previously, management at the stadium have decreed it to be a public transport destination, meaning there is no general car parking available other than for coaches and blue badge holders.

These spaces have to be prebooked and paid for, something the Wembley literature fails to tell you.

Spaces are half-

price to blue

badge









From the top: some of the wheelchair seating, the pitch, players' changing rooms and showers, a map of the stadium and the refurbished Wembley Park tube station

holders, at a cost of ten pounds.

This one (albeit major) criticism aside, the new Wembley is everything a modern national stadium should be – intimidating, impressive, and most importantly, truly accessible.



Twickenham

Currently undergoing considerable expansion, Twickenham now has a capacity of 82,000, making it the second biggest stadium in England behind Wembley.

There is level access into the stadium, with a total of 286 areas at pitch level that can accommodate wheelchairusers or others with mobility impairments.

When redevelopment of the South Stand is complete, it will have new covered terraces with 39 accessible spaces in both the south-east and southwest corners.

The RFU hopes these terraces will be completed in time for the Six Nations in 2008.

On west level three, there is an adapted terrace accessible by lift that is used on international matchdays to accommodate former rugby players who became injured or disabled playing the game.

The current ticket office has recently been refurbished, and a fully accessible new ticket office will be opened in the South Stand.

Accessible toilets locked by RADAR key are available in each corner of the stadium.

or David Connor (New Versa Enquirles),

Phil Hawkins (Used Versa Specialist).



Unlike Wembley, blue badge parking is free, and disabled people are not charged for the use of wheelchair spaces inside the stadium. Tickets are allocated by ballot.

Ken Davis has been attending Twickenham for many years as a supporter of Gloucester rugby club, and says he has "never had a single problem" with the facilities and customer service at Twickenham.

He says: "The good thing about Twickenham is that they now allocate spaces right at the front near the touchlines on all four sides, and it puts you in amongst the crowd. For me that was important because I go there for the atmosphere and the sport, whereas if you're in your own little self-contained area you tend to lose that atmosphere." * Twickenham – tel: 020 8831 6666, visit www.rfu.com

Lord's

Access into most parts of Lord's is via level access roadways, although the lower tiers of the Grand Stand and Mound Stand are accessed by small staircases.

The upper tiers can be reached by accessible lifts, while the ticket office, garden and bar areas are all accessible by either level roadways or ramps.

There are enclosures for wheelchair-users along with PAs situated in front of the Warner and Mound Stands, although it is worth noting that these areas are uncovered.

Accessible toilets are available at ground level in the Main, Warner, Mound and Pavilion stands, all of which

are locked with RADAR keys.

Parking may be an issue for some at Lord's, with no car parking available at the ground at

The nearest available parking is up to a mile away, although set-down and pick-up passes can be obtained by calling Lord's directly.

Lord's has also launched a new audio description service for blind and visually-impaired spectactors, providing ball-byball commentary via headsets available from stewards or at the gate.

Tim Guttridge, an MCC member and England blind cricketer who attends Lord's regularly as both a player and spectator, says the new service is "excellent"

He says: "Our blind cricket cup final is always played at Lord's, and last season we even had audio commentary on our game. There were a lot of blind and visually impaired people going to that game so it was terrific."

* Lord's - tel: 020 7432 1000, visit www.lords.org/lordsground/spectators-withdisabilities/

Olympic Stadium

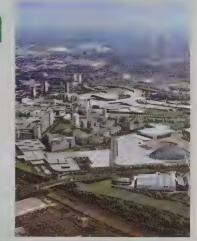
At present, the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) has yet to release detailed plans or information on precisely what facilities will be available for disabled people in London's new Olympic Stadium.

The ODA's equality and diversity strategy, published in January, states that the entire Olympic Park will be "fully

accessible to disabled people with a wide range of impairments, and provide an accessible transport network"

But DN reported in March how blue badge parking spaces at the Olympic Park could be as much as 250 metres from the park entrance.

* Olympics – tel: 0203 2012 000, visit www.london2012.org





website: www.wheelchair-access.co.uk e-mail: versa@wheelchair-access.co.uk

MONDAY - FRIDAY 9.00am - 5.30pm

Virtually the same



Disabled entrepreneur Simon Stevens could have entered the virtual world of Second Life as anyone or anything he wanted. He explains why he chose to be a wheelchair-user campaigning for equality

magine a world where you could fly, where you could teleport anywhere, where you could meet thousands of people any time, go to nightclubs, listen to live artists, do a bit of sailing, or skydiving, and do all this and more without leaving the comfort of your home.

Well, this is Second Life, the virtual world which is revolutionising the internet and how we interact. With more than five million users, Second Life is a 3D virtual world where almost anything is possible.

Users, called residents, can purchase land and build their own homes, shops, nightclubs, offices, whatever. They can design objects and clothes, or become DJs, sing at music events, gamble at a casino, or simply shop until they drop.

This is no game, though, because Second Life has its own currency, which can be exchanged for real money — some people are making a real life living from Second Life.

Second Life is something you have to see to believe and no amount of words will explain it properly. For some, including myself, it has been life-changing, both socially and in my work. But Second Life is not pure escapism, as it offers a new sense of realism within a new frontier of social interaction.

So what does this mean for disabled people? Well, the key here is the avatar. This is your "character" within Second Life and its appearance can be customised in any way you can imagine. You can even appear as an animal (Second Life has a large "flurry" community). The



Rights club: Simon set up Second Life's first nightclub for disabled people, called Wheelies

avatar is a powerful device in ensuring an inner self-identity.

So for some disabled people, Second Life is an opportunity to escape from their impairment. Disclosure is optional and this "second life" often suits people who became disabled after birth.

There is, however, a group of

'It challenges the very nature of impairment when someone chooses to appear as disabled'

disabled people, including myself, who wish to appear disabled within Second Life. Due to the flexibility of the technology, their avatars can use wheelchairs, crutches and even walking frames! There is also a community of avatars with Asperger's syndrome and I have met someone who uses a cane. (As yet, Second Life has a long way to go before it is accessible to visually impaired people.)

Within an environment which is perceived to be barrier free, it challenges the very nature of

impairment and disability when someone chooses to appear disabled. As a fellow Second Life wheelchair-user called Brian Roop said: "I do not know how to be non-disabled, so why would I want to be?"

This is why I use a wheelchair and helmet, similar to those in real life. My avatar is "Simon Walsh" and for the most part is very similar to my real-life self — but without the beer gut.

While it is assumed that Second Life is accessible, this is not always so. It contains a lot of weird architecture, and there are no building regulations. Whether people are using a wheelchair or not, physical access can be difficult, due to narrow walkways, steep ramps and stairs and a lack of rails. Climbing stairs can be very bumpy for your avatar!

Because of the wide diversity of avatars, wheelchair-users are very much included within Second Life activities. There are, as anywhere, idiots who make offensive remarks. Within more private settings, there is a set of questions people always ask, which include "are you disabled in real life?" and "why do you use a wheelchair?" which can make for interesting chats.

I personally changed Second Life's attitude towards disability when I set up "Wheelies", its first disability nightclub. This was one of those daft ideas which grew and grew and despite being closed for repairs for some months, has remained a central point for disability issues within Second Life. Many new disabled users make contact with me for advice and Wheelies has helped some of them "come out" and use a wheelchair. The disabled community has grown and there is now a business making customised wheelchairs for disabled residents.

My appearance in Second Life's *Big Brother* in December was also cutting-edge in bringing disability issues into the forefront, as I still remain the first person with cerebral palsy anywhere in the world to take part in *Big Brother*.

But while it could be argued that Second Life offers a better life for many disabled users, is there any possibility of addiction and a withdrawal from reality? As with radio, television and mobile phones, it has always been a concern, but for the majority, Second Life is merely a tool to be balanced with other parts of life.

Second Life is a future that will be hard to ignore and somewhere disabled people have opportunities unimaginable in their first life. So come and join the party and I look forward to seeing you at Wheelies.

Rules of the game

Second Life is an online, virtual world that has been running since 2003 and has five million members around the world.

You create an "avatar", or online persona, through which you meet others, work and own property. You can even have sex with other avatars, riot and be killed, although if that happens your avatar is "respawned".

There is also a Second Life prison in the form of a giant cornfield.

You have to be over 18, though there is another version for 13-17-year-olds.

A basic account is free, but users can spend and make real money in the marketplace. Real money buys "Linden Dollars" which can be spent or invested, and converted back into currency on the "LindeX" exchange.

Visit www.secondlife.com

A beginner's story

Having been asked to try
Second Life to give a
beginner's viewpoint, I was
largely underwhelmed – I
found myself wandering
aimlessly among market
stalls and clothes shops that
were offering to make my
avatar look like Raggedy
Anne, or a blue goose.

It's safe to say my first two social interactions with others weren't exactly enlightening either. Within my first few minutes online, I was happily minding my own business mooching around an open-air art gallery only to be knocked over by a scary-looking woman who then proceeded to reprimand me in German. At least I think that's what she was doing; it was hard to tell.

Later, I was enjoying the cosmopolitan surroundings of an island coffee shop (I had a hot chocolate. My avatar enjoyed it). Much to my delight and slight feeling of impending dread, a rather attractive collection of pixels called Mailys came and chose an empty seat next to me. Me! The excitement was short-lived - she played with her hair for a bit, got bored, and went to speak to a younger, more attractive avatar over at the counter. Story of my Second Life. Third Life anyone?

Paul Carter

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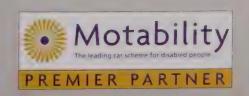
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Journey of the Weston Spirit

n 8 June, 1982, Simon Weston was a Welsh Guard on board the ship Sir Galahad off the Falkland Islands when it was bombed by the Argentineans.

He sustained extensive psychological damage and almost 50 per cent burns to his body.

One moment, he says, he was a fit, 20-year-old rugby player. "Then all of a sudden I was this burned, highly-dependent-on-others, ex-rugby player, exsoldier, not knowing what future my life was ever going to have."

He says he was "not prepared" for being injured. "If you are not prepared for being injured, you are not going to be prepared for what people might say or think," he says. "You have got to take it in your stride."

Over the years, he has come across any number of people who have commented on the way he now looks, who have been "bigoted...rude...or arrogant enough to think that they have the right to say whatever they feel and sod your feelings.

"The fact of the matter is, sometimes it will either kill you or make you. For me, it is the making of me. I am the type of guy who will kick back.
Trust me, when I kick back, I kick back."

He had 85 operations in five

years after his injuries, and says he is now content with his looks

"I don't feel embarrassed by the way I look and I don't feel ashamed by the way I look."

He says he would not consider a facial transplant, because he has had 25 years to get used to how he now looks.

But then he says he might consider the option if it wasn't for the months of surgery, the drugs, and all the inevitable media "nonsense".

"It would be lovely to be able to walk down the road and be

'It is the making of me. I am the type who will kick back. Trust me, when I kick back I kick back'

anonymous," he says. "Being able to go out and chop wood, that would be absolutely wonderful, to be able to rip up plants from the ground with your bare hands and not worry about it causing blisters, or ripping the skin off your hands."

Now, 25 years on from the war, Weston has carved himself a new career as a motivational speaker, an author – his sixth book, this one for children and called *Mike the Milk*, is due out later this year – and a TV presenter.

There is a lot of motivational

language and positivity scattered throughout his conversation, but he has also struggled with depression.

At one point, he tried to commit suicide, but gave up when he nearly tore the tops of his fingers off while cocking a crossbow.

"It was just a moment of true desperation, true, true loneliness and sadness," he says. "If it had been a genuine attempt to end it, I would have achieved it, because I am pretty determined, and I am pretty good at doing whatever I set my mind to doing.

"It was a fit of pique. I was drinking way too much. I just could not see where the light at the end of the tunnel was. I had no right to think like I was thinking, but I was just in that big, dark hole that we get into every now and again."

Simon talks about his former service comrades with affection throughout our conversation in a hotel bar in Cardiff. But more surprising is his affection for the pilot who bombed his ship: "I had always wanted to meet the guy. I always wanted to see if he had life in his eyes. I always wanted to see if he was a decent human being.

"And he was, and he is a lovely guy. He was just doing a job. It was not personal. He did not come along and say, 'there is Simon Weston, I am going to give him a good hammering,' he just said, 'well, there is the target, I am going to hit the target'."

Simon, who is married with two sons aged 15 and 13, and a nine-year-old daughter, is covering the 25th anniversary of the war for ITN.

"You are lucky to get me today, this is my only day off," he says. He has just returned from recording a documentary for Radio 4, and is juggling his charity and media work with his business as a motivational speaker.

'I had always wanted to meet the guy. I always wanted to see if he had life in his eyes'

"This is a one-off year.
Things will probably slow down a little in another six or 12 months. The Falklands will be forgotten about to a degree, and we will move on."

For him, the anniversary will not be any more poignant than any other year. "I suppose there will be a moment which will catch me in the back of the throat. I am an emotional character, like a lot of other people. There will be a time when it happens, but the rest of it will be just as it has been for the last 25 years. It just happens. The time does not make the

event any more emotional than it was."

In 1988, he co-founded Weston Spirit, to give young people choices which he never had.

"Weston Spirit came around because of an observation that I had made choices in my life out of desperation, and I did not want other young people to do that.

"If they made the choice of joining the military out of informed, reasonable, sensible choices, then fine, great, go for it. It's a great life. It can be a great career. It's a very hard and a very thankless one, but it's great fun with your friends.

"But that being said, it should always be made from a position of strength, not weakness. I was 16 years of age and I don't regret a moment of joining the army, but I would like to have made the choices out of more consideration. I was in trouble with the law, and I needed to get away from where I was."

Unlike the Falklands War,
Weston believes the current
conflict in Iraq is unjustified.
"Iraq is about oil. It is about
nothing else. It does not matter
how much spin or how many
lies the politicians tell. It's
clearly about oil."

His anger is directed at George Bush and Tony Blair. "They will be fine because they will go off to their multibillionaire pads and places of retirement," he says, "and the rest of us will be left to live with it and face the fears and uncertainty created by all of that."

Weston describes himself as "a rugby-watching, beer-swilling, pot-bellied, burned bloke from Wales".

"I don't think of myself as disabled, except when it comes to doing things and there is a restriction. I don't think anybody disabled does until they actually can't do something physically or mentally because of whatever barriers they have. Although I have impairments, it does not mean that that's all I have. I can laugh and enjoy myself. I can still watch rugby. I can still drive a car. I've cycled across America. I've done marathons."

Despite the injuries he sustained on the Sir Galahad, and his darker moments, Weston says his life has been "one big positive".

"There were 48 people aboard the Sir Galahad who would love to be sitting here talking to you, and a lot of them did not even see their sons and daughters born.

"Even with all the scars I have, I still see myself as luckier than most."









WHO IS HE?

Simon Weston OBE lives with his wife and three children in South Wales.

He joined the Welsh Guards in 1978 and in June 1982 was on the ship Sir Galahad which was bombed by the Argentineans during the Falklands War.

His story has been told in several television documentaries, and he used to present a radio show on BBC Radio Wales.

He has helped raise millions of pounds for charity and in 1988, he co-founded Weston Spirit, a charity which works with young people who have been bullied, or have turned to drugs, crime and alcohol.

He is a motivational speaker, and has written five books. *Mike the Milk*, a children's book, is due out later this year.

He is a big rugby fan and says he would love to be able to speak Welsh.



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'Lakes made me feel disabled'

On the issue of the use of blue badges, it appears the same regulations do not apply to Northern Ireland (where I live) as they do in England. I only discovered this when on a trip to the Lake District just last week.

We parked in a disabled space in a car park in Keswick and displayed my badge in what is the correct manner in Northern Ireland (NI), but came back to a £60 parking ticket.

We went to the council office, where we discovered that in England you need to display a parking disc for the blue badge to be valid. I've just been checking this out and it does seem that of all the EU member states only Denmark, England and Wales apply this add-on regulation.

I believe that people from other countries should be exempt but, of course, NI is part of the UK and so my badge has the country marked as such.

So, despite our NI car

registration, I cannot entirely blame the traffic warden.

In 20 years of driving, I have never received any traffic violations. Nor has my husband, in his 30 years of driving.

I did find the Lake District very difficult as someone with a mobility impairment and indeed I have never felt more disabled than I have in the last few days.

I am appealing this ticket and I must say the lady at the council office was very helpful, despite the fact that I was rather angry.

She did say that we were obviously the same as in Scotland so they must have had Scottish people in with the same problem.

I hope you may be able to make people from Scotland and Northern Ireland aware of this difference and hopefully be able to save them £60 and an awful lot of stress.

Mary Heron, Bangor, Co Down

Compliments provide scant relief

I can sympathise with Jack Hayllor and his hidden impairments (*DN Extra*, *April*, *page 7*). Six years ago, I badly fractured my neck. I had a minor stroke, I blacked out, fell backwards and crashed my head against the front door.

I spent several weeks in hospital on traction. My arms were paralysed but I did eventually get full use of them again.

What I wasn't told until much later was that I had severed a

nerve. The pain gradually got worse and over the last three years I have fought what is now a "burning pain". Each time it gets worse I think I cannot take any more. My GP has tried everything but I am told it is incurable and will get worse. The only relief I can get is to lie down in bed morning and afternoon for at least one hour.

As with Jack, I have nothing to show what is happening. I have a naturally ruddy face and I can walk with a stick for about

half an hour and people say: "You do look so well!"

I live in a flat in a private retirement development with my wife. I often meet other residents and always get the same phrase.

They will not believe my problem. People I meet outside are the same. I have given up trying to convince people and let them think I am the picture of health. It is a no-win situation. Good luck, Jack. W London, Hailsham, East Sussex

Screening test is just the start

One year on from the official roll out of the NHS Newborn Hearing Screening Programme (NHSP) and every child in England is screened for deafness as soon as they are born.

The test ensures that hearing loss and impairment is identified on average two years earlier than previously. As early intervention is vitally important for the development of all deaf children, this test is a cause for celebration.

However, the question of what happens after a child is identified as deaf still looms large. The reality is far from ideal. Too many parents are discovering that while their child might well be identified as deaf as soon as they are born, support is then sorely lacking.

As arguments with local authorities about entitlements persist, deaf children's communication development is put on hold and vital time is lost.

The government's action plan on audiology, launched in March, does not contain a single section on children's services. This is a gaping hole.

For the futures of the 35,000 deaf children in the UK and the three babies born deaf every day, the government must deliver a more supportive service where the need for information is the first priority after the identification of deafness. The great screening programme is only the start. Susan Daniels, chief executive, National Deaf Children's Society

Small is beautiful

Peter Burton (DN, March, letters) comments on wheelchairs in shops. I am lucky in that my local shop and post office is most kind. I have an electric scooter which I could get into the shop but it would get in everyone's way. I send my shopping list, and money, into the shop and/or post office and they bring out what I need. Would this happen in a supermarket? The shop is run by an Asian family who have built a ramp to the door which helps all, pushchairs, etc, included.

Of course, this waiting outside is not possible on a rainy, windy or snowy day, but they do their best to help. Advice then: cultivate small shops, they are more human.

Eunice Wilson, London SW6

Forgetting important carers

I was reading about the care boost for carers (*DN Extra*, *March*, *page 2*). I welcome the thoughts of Imelda Redmond, chief executive of Carers UK, who said that we need this to be the start of a visionary strategy.

I hope this strategy will include something about carers with learning disabilities.

As a carer with a learning disability myself, I care for my husband and I was most upset by Simone Aspis's comment ("We fear carers' needs will take preference over the needs of disabled people"), because there are now many people with learning disabilities who are carers. They are looking after

older parents, or sometimes a sister or brother, a husband or wife, or just their partners.

A lot of people with learning disabilities have to fight damn hard just to get their rights, like a care assessment, and they fight to get their local social services to listen to them so they can get a good quality of life for the person they care for. This makes carers with learning disabilities feel unvalued as carers.

We haven't got a network for carers with learning disabilities but the Who Cares For Us? project wants to make sure they are not forgotten as carers.

Eve Rank, carer and Who Cares For Us? project member

Pensions hit by tax

I am on incapacity benefit and have a small private pension of £40 per week. This will now be taxed at 20 per cent rather than 10 per cent at present.

It is bad enough that my incapacity benefit is taxed without this little pension being taxed at 20 per cent as well.

Another double whammy is that my wife is 61 and has a small private pension of just over £20 per week and that will be taxed at 20 per cent. How unfair can the Labour Party be? Allen Bergson, Pinner, Middlesex

go

Stuart

Please send Stuart Wyatt my good wishes of support for his campaign to allow those in pain to grow their own cannabis instead of having to pay for expensive cannabis spray.

Support for Stuart

Both myself and my partner have a lot of pain. I have fibromyalgia, but cannabis doesn't work for either of us. However, we know it does for many, and if there is anything we can do to support Stuart Wyatt could he please let us know. Stephanie Marshall, by email Editor's note: we have forwarded Stephanie's email to

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RNIB 'is run by disabled people'

In response to a misleading comment from Simone Aspis of the United Kingdom's Disabled People's Council (*RNIB image revamp*, *DN*, *April* 2007, *page* 5), I'm writing to point out just how inclusive the Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) is and that we really are "run and controlled by disabled people".

Most importantly, we have more than 8,000 members with sight problems who are regularly consulted. Twenty of our 23 trustees have a sight problem, as do more than 60 of our 87 assembly members. Our chairman is blind, as are two of our six group directors, including myself.

There is always more an organisation can do but RNIB is committed to diversity and strives to be a strong voice not for but of blind and partially – sighted people.

Fazilet Hadi, RNIB group director of policy and advocacy

Convictions build pressure

The recent conviction of a number of high-profile campaigners who supplied cannabis or cannabis-based products for medicinal purposes continues to highlight the courts' stance that medical necessity is not a defence available to those who use or supply cannabis for medicinal purposes.

However, their cases have increased pressure on the government to resolve the situation in respect of the availability of cannabis-based medicines such as Sativex. Unfortunately, this comes as the police are under increasing pressure to tackle criminal gangs who are producing cannabis on a phenomenal scale.

The emergence of large-scale production facilities controlled by criminal gangs only serves to increase public concerns over cannabis and the organised criminality that is often associated with the drug. This often overshadows the use of the drug for medical purposes.

With increasing pressure on police to tackle the production of cannabis there is the increasing likelihood that many small growers will be targeted in any enforcement clampdown.

Growers who produce anything more than a very modest set-up with a small



Lezley Gibson: Found guilty of medicinal cannabis charge

quantity of plants can expect to be potentially charged with trafficking offences.

In these circumstances, it is imperative that growers who have been arrested seek legal advice from a solicitor at the earliest opportunity.

Whilst medical necessity may not provide a defence to a charge involving cannabis, it may go some way towards offering significant mitigation. Allen Morgan, a substance misuse lecturer and independent expert witness in cannabis cases www.drugexpert.co.uk

Regarding your cannabis campaign. I have a severe back problem. I can't relax at all and I'm limited to day-to-day tasks, but having a couple of joints helps me relax. I hope they legalise it for disabled people. George Jones, by email

web watch

Have your say and join others chatting at www.disabilitynow.org.uk

How can I get people to see beyond my disfigurement?

I'm 43. I was born with cerebral palsy and hydrocephalus. The hydrocephalus was cured by shunts when I was a kid, but it's left its mark – bulging forehead, jaw you could hang a coathanger from, smile like an extra from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

And that's, of course, what everyone sees first. Which gets one of two reactions. The first is "Oh God, they're not all locked up yet." Second is "Target Approaching – Seek and Destroy." That's been characterised by, in the last five years, me having all my teeth kicked out, given permanent intentional burns by a girl in a day centre and having three flats trashed, two of them on the grounds I was a paedophile. Their reasons for thinking this? I look odd.

It also stops me from getting jobs. Many of you must have gone to interviews and been asked "Can you read the form, dear?" or "Can you fill it in by yourself?" Or worse. Annoying, isn't it! Personal relationships, forget them. Only ever had two female friends. Both of them got so tired of being asked if they were my keeper or helper—I'm not in a wheelchair and don't consider I need help.

I don't know how to get people to see past the Mr Dopey face to the well-qualified brain inside. Many disabled people are employed but – no offence here, please – their faces are OK. I just have The Face.

I go for every voluntary job and get told "We'll get in touch, dear". They never do. How do you get people past this? How do you get them to give you a chance? I feel like I'm outside a wonderful party, trying to get past the bouncers and the back doors seem to be locked.

When I volunteer at disabled people's clubs, the other members think of me as able-bodied. Thing is, the other able-bodied think of me as disabled and never let me do anything in the way of helping. I flatly refuse to spend my entire existence in a state of enforced uselessness, I just don't know how to get started.

Yours in hope, Christopher Burke

backchat

At a time when every second email to Backchat's computer details another case of disability discrimination, some encouraging news. While Backchat was exercising his assistance dog in our notorious local park, he was approached by a "young" lady, who said: "I'm just trying to make a living. I'm a working girl. You're not interested, are you? I've not made a penny all day." Needless to say, in the fine tradition of investigative journalists, Backchat made his excuses and left. But good to see a lack of discrimination in this particular service industry.

Following the Disability Rights Commission's announcement that scores of public bodies had failed to publish disability equality schemes, some reassuring news from our favourite watchdog. Asked if the DRC itself had published a scheme, a press officer told Backchat: "Er, yeah, I'm pretty sure we do..." We are happy to report that a second press officer later called back to confirm that the DRC does, indeed, have its own scheme. Phew...

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Death by lethal injection is no way to go for a cute ball of fluff, says Paul Betney

or those of you who missed it, Knut is a phenomenon. The baby polar bear born in Berlin Zoo is a brand to be reckoned with. Backed by the kind of press coverage usually reserved for rock stars, children scream his name and stuffed toy bears are flying off the shelves at the souvenir shop. The zoo is having a bear bonanza. Is KNUT the new FCUK?

But it took a bizarre twist to launch this glittering career. For a while, simply being the first polar bear to be born and to have survived at the zoo for more than 30 years just wasn't enough.

Knut only shot to fame when the German tabloid Bild published an article by a group of animal rights activists who actually want the bear killed.

The argument for Knut's demise - by lethal injection, no less - apparently runs along the lines that his mother rejected him and, therefore, by



'One day he'll head for the Arctic in a smoking jacket, sipping whisky

the law of nature, the cute little ball of fluff should have been left to die.

Now at the risk of seeming to play on a cliché, I have to say that I do genuinely get nervous

when people start talking about the laws of nature and survival of the fittest. As someone with a disability, I don't particularly relish the idea of the weak being left to die. Worse still, if the weak should have the sheer audacity to survive, I relish even less the idea of putting the blighters down with lethal injections. Life's hard enough for the weak.

To this way of thinking, putting Knut in an incubator and bottle-feeding him was somehow cheating nature of a light lunch. Not only that, but now that humans have rescued him, they say, he is hopelessly tainted and will always find it hard to be with his own kind.

Possibly, they are concerned he might become so humanized that one day he'll head for the Arctic in a smoking jacket, sipping whisky, starting wars and claiming ownership of oil and mineral reserves. Now that fear I could understand and, to speak bluntly, if that were the case I'd be first in line to inject the little bugger.

But if we cannot help animals, does that mean they herald the end of guide dogs lest blind people start finding it sort" and start taking on doglike tendencies, rutting in the

sanity will prevail. Quoted in The Guardian after visiting the when he was rejected by his mother that he should have been left to die for his own sake, but he's clearly a real fighter, so I'm glad he was given a chance."

cannot help us? Does this hard to be with their "own park, smelling each other's bums and urinating on gate posts? Where does it end? Still, there is hope that zoo, 12-year-old Adrianna Zielinska said: "I did think

Well, I'm sure she isn't as glad as Knut, but it's good to see that even hard-hearted children can be swayed. Our future is in safe hands. * For details of future Abnormally Funny People gigs, visit

www.abnormallyfunny

people.com

WORLD VIEW

SIMON MINTY

Many Chinese people recognise The problem is how to achieve it

hina is a fascinating place, both its past and future. With 1.3 billion people and huge recent social and economic shifts, it is also hard to ignore. As it emerges and Western influences merge and conflict with its Communist roots, the world is taking a keen interest in its financial status and economic influence, its human rights approaches and the threats and opportunities it poses.

In January this year, I visited the British Council offices in five cities in China and Hong Kong to deliver disability training and advice, and to attend a series of events. My whirlwind itinerary included Beijing, Chongqing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong.

'The rich and famous try

to prove their child has

an impairment so they

My brief covered the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the can have another child' social model.

the Paralympics, international approaches to disability and regional disability issues. This work linked to the British Council's proactive approach to its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

I talked with 400 people, including British Council staff and social workers, teachers, academics, professionals from the arts and media, corporates such as delegates from HSBC, PepsiCo and IT firms, local government officials and members of local and national disability organisations.

I expected cultural attitudes towards disability to be so different from the UK. They weren't. The people I met understood the need to shift from an approach of primarily welfare and charity to that of independence, inclusion and rights for disabled people. The main difficulty was how.

For example, to try and control population increases, China has a "one child per family" policy. However, if your child is born with a disability, you are allowed to have another one. Newspapers reported the rich and famous were trying to prove their firstborn had an impairment so they could have another child. If you want to change how disabled people are perceived,

to have a national policy which doesn't recognise the "status" of a disabled child towards the one child per family policy, is a tough place to start from.

There were positive examples - I met one disabled individual in a mainstream job, working for HSBC as an accountant. Additionally, the new subway in Guangzhou will be accessible to wheelchair-

Despite our perceptions of an up-and-coming China, alongside hosting the Paralympics next year, it is still a developing country and equality issues are not yet a priority. There is antidiscrimination legislation for disabled people - but it is more aspirational than enforceable.

> Access is limited. Larger buildings and Westerninfluenced organisations are slightly

ahead. There are some provisions for sensoryimpaired people, but this is hit and miss. Lonely Planet suggests "don't go", whereas I would suggest "be prepared".

In terms of employment, China works on a percentage quota of disabled employees. This is similar to some countries in Europe, but the system rarely works and there is a lack of enforcement.

There are disability representative groups, the main one being the China Disabled Persons Federation. They have acknowledged from their trips abroad that their approach to disability equality might be inadequate.

I took my electronic mobility scooter, which got more attention than me. It cost £500 and without support such as the Motability scheme, buying one is unlikely in China. However, the size of the potential market could bring the price down someday. When it does, then they can start work on dropped kerbs!

It might still be too early to tell whether China will be ready for the Paralympics. But I think the Paralympians will do a huge amount in really effecting change through their expectations, skills and sheer visibility.

Simon Minty is director of Minty and Friend, a disability and diversity training and consultancy company. Simon's blog on his visit is at www.myspace.com/simonminty1



Has Tanni been a positive role model?

Wheelchair sports boss Martin McElhatton says Dame Tanni Grey Thompson has been an inspiration for other disabled people. But writer Penny Pepper says Tanni's iconic status has done little to change ingrained attitudes

"She has achieved her sporting dreams and inspired countless disabled people"



Dame Tanni Grey Thompson is Britain's bestknown Paralympic

athlete, having performed at the very top in wheelchair racing from 100m up to 26.2 mile marathons.

Tanni has participated in every major international competition, including five Paralympic Games, from Seoul, Korea, in 1988, to Athens, Greece, in 2004, winning 16 Paralympic medals, including 11 golds. Add to that six gold medals in the London marathon and numerous British and world records and it is easy to see why Tanni is truly an iconic figure in British and Paralympic sport.

Born with spina bifida in Cardiff in 1969, Tanni was encouraged by her parents to be independent and attended her local primary and comprehensive schools, subsequently obtaining an honours degree in politics at Loughborough University.

During her school years, Tanni travelled to Stoke Mandeville stadium for the national junior games, where she was inspired to try many sports, eventually developing a passion for wheelchair racing.

It became a catalyst in Tanni's life, allowing her to fulfill her sporting dreams and inspire countless disabled people to lead positive and active lives.

Tanni has received many accolades, including being voted into third place in the BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2000, winning BBC Wales Sports Personality of the Year three times and being named as Welsh Woman of the Year.

In 2000, Tanni was decorated with the OBE, in honour of her services to sport, and in 2004 she became a Dame.

She is a positive role model and an inspirational speaker, whether talking to school children, sports organisations or as an advocate for the many charities she supports.

Through her achievements, there is a greater awareness and understanding of disability sport and disability issues.

After a glittering career, Tanni is retiring from the international scene and will make her final appearance at the VISA Paralympic World Cup in Manchester.

Many Paralympic athletes have been inspired by this wonderful sportswoman. Martin McElhatton, chief executive, WheelPower



"There are disturbing ramifications for many of us with the idea of achievement based on athleticism"



I must stress that any dismay I feel about athlete Tanni Grey Thompson is not

from any casual hatred of all things sporty and I cannot comment on her in any personal sense. Yet her iconic status as well-loved Paralympian seems to have done little to change ingrained attitudes towards disabled people, particularly when it comes to the tired culture of "overcoming".

This notion underpins disconcerting ideas of denying disability – and in a politicised

disability context, what is this "overcoming" malarkey trying to tell us?

What should we make of the famous (infamous?) incident of the non-existent ramp at the BBC, when Tanni won third prize in the BBC Sports
Personality of the Year, about which she reputedly said she bore no hard feelings? What good is being the fastest wheels in the free world when you don't have basic access – basic equality – to receive your award?

The ramp incident may have occurred some time ago, but now we have programmes such as the BBC's *Beyond Boundaries*, that perpetuate this theme of overcoming. Pretty, exotic scenery and lots of sweaty, bickering fit people may be mildly entertaining but

it also reminds us of the manner in which non-disabled society would like to value us. Which is in a way that is comfortable, convenient and comprehensible to them – where we are plucky fighters overcoming our dastardly, damaged bodies.

I do not for one moment attack Tanni's obvious admirable excellence in her chosen field, but there are deeper, disturbing ramifications for many of us within the idea of achievement based primarily on such athleticism.

It is no surprise that numbers of disabled people are left in a grey hinterland, wondering where they might belong if their bodies do not fit in any part of this mainstream, crazy, body-bound zeitgeist.

What if you cannot, and indeed do not, want to "overcome" in this sense? From my own perspective, I cannot join this club, no matter how brave and courageous I am, and I would hope disabled people might expect to be valued, and come to value themselves, in other ways that do not rely on unobtainable physical conformity.

We must resist the blood, sweat and ultimately pointless tears we may shed in trying to be athletically normal. Penny Pepper is a performer and writer

ANDY RICKELL

Labour has done a great deal, but made two major errors

ave disabled people benefited from 10 years of a Labour government? Yes and no.

There is no doubt the current government has done more than any other to extend disabled people's rights to non-discrimination – the extension of the DDA through the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act and the DDA 2005 and the creation of the Disability Rights Commission and now the Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

Also, disabled people can more readily defend their basic human rights as a result of the Human Rights Act, and the government played a positive role in negotiations on the UN Convention.

The Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People report enshrined the principles of the social model, independent living and inclusion into government policy, and led to the creation of the Office for Disability Issues and Equality 2025 – the UK Advisory Network for Disability Equality.

However, I think there has been one major tactical failure and one major strategic failure in government policy.

The tactical failure has been around education. The government has failed to hold the line that educational inclusion – properly resourced mainstream education – is in the best interests of all disabled children and young people, in the face of a special education lobby.

The strategic failure has been not to fund the income and support some disabled

people need to facilitate choice and control over their lives and achieve independent living, social inclusion and full citizenship. Instead, some disabled people are facing rationing of essential support, uncertainties about benefits, and increasingly having to contribute to state provision.

That is why the right to independent living, as proposed in Lord Ashley's independent living bill, is the next disability rights battleground.

A good opportunity to fight for that will be the launch of the Our Lives, Our Choices campaign at Westminster on 20 June, for which transport will be available for demonstrators. Contact me for more information*.

*Tel: 020 7619 7367, or email: andy.rickell@scope.org.uk

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There are also links to charities and other helpful organisations supporting disabled people

For clearly written, useful and easy-to-find information all in one place, just go to www.direct.gov.uk/disability

Public services all in one place

Andy is an executive director at Scope

Inspecting the inspectors

Traffic wardens have had the power to inspect blue badges since last autumn, but are they using them? asks motoring correspondent Helen Smith

ith the price of parking escalating and London's congestion charge now £8 a day, blue disabled badges have become hot property. Blue badge theft is becoming more prevalent and the police now estimate a badge can be sold for about £1,500 on the black market.

'They should target hotspots where there is great potential for abuse because parking is bloody expensive'

To try and tackle the growing misuse of badges, the government brought in new powers last September, giving parking attendants in England the right to inspect blue badges – previously only a police officer was able to do so.

Opinions vary greatly about how successful councils have been in implementing the new powers. Mary Grace, chairman of The Blue Badge Network, is cautiously optimistic.

She says: "The new powers

definitely make a big difference if they are used and general badgeholders are very enthusiastic about them. It's a question of the councils having the will to use them and there's not much we can do about that other than beg them to do so."

But Douglas Campbell, chair of Mobilise, feels the powers have made little difference. "Local authorities have very little understanding of their legal obligations and there seems to be an absence of joined-up thinking.

"They should target hotspots around transport interchanges, and football grounds, where there is great potential for abuse because parking is bloody expensive.

"One problem is that there is not a lot of profit in it for councils, who only get refunded the cost of towing cars away and have to mount complicated and expensive legal cases."

We decided to carry out a straw poll of 10 councils, to see which were using them and which were not.

The London Borough of Islington says it has been

using the new powers since October. Of all the councils I spoke to, Islington was the only one that was keeping records of the number of badges retained for misuse. This varied from 36 in November to just six in January.

They told me that on Arsenal Football Club home match-days, as many as 400 extra blue badges appear on the streets - these are the most prolific days for improper use. Nineteen cases have been heard at court since October, and a further 26 are in various stages of the legal process. The council has been successful at court on all but one occasion, with fines of up to £2,400. Cllr Lucy Watt, an Islington councillor, said: "Blue badge fraud will not be tolerated. It's a criminal act and we won't hesitate to press for the strongest penalties in court."

But very few authorities seem to be using this new tool to clamp down on fraud quite as firmly as Islington. Ashford Borough Council is using the new powers of inspection, and says it has fined people for incorrect use of the badge,

but that it doesn't keep records on how many people have been fined.

Cambridgeshire
County Council says
it takes blue badge
fraud very seriously and

that it was runner-up in this year's "Parking Oscars" for effective on-street parking management. It employs a team of parking attendants who are using the new enforcement powers. But no records or numbers of offences are yet being recorded.

'Blue badge fraud will not be tolerated. It is a criminal act'

Derby City Council is also using the new powers. However, one of the problems it is facing is that when traffic wardens are doing their rounds, the badge-users are not usually in their cars, so it is difficult for them to check the badge against the person. It does, however, keep copies of all the badges brought in to the council by badge-holders who have been fined for displaying them incorrectly. So far, it has found several being used despite having expired and others bearing the wrong signature.

Gloucestershire County Council, Herefordshire County Council, Kent County Council and Norfolk County Council also say their parking attendants are using the new powers, but were unable to provide any further information.

But there are some councils which admit they are not using the powers at all. Babergh District Council does not use the powers because it still runs a criminalised parking system which means it doesn't employ traffic wardens and the police are responsible for all on-road issues.

The City of London council says it will not use the new powers until its staff have received appropriate training. The council declined to comment further.

But although eight out of 10 councils I surveyed are using these new powers, The National Association of Blue Badge Holders does not think they have made any difference. It is still inundated with calls from people who are unable to park close to their destination because all the disabled spaces are taken.



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Dear Rachel

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Rachel Wilson, who is disabled herself, has spent many years advising on disability matters. Write to her at *Disability Now*, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW or email your problem to editor@disabilitynow.org.uk



Is Brown blind?

read with great difficulty the following statement by Keith Rothwell: "Under the 1948 National Assistance Act, Gordon Brown is classed as blind, which means Britain will officially have its first blind Prime Minister." (DN Extra, March, page 7).

I have struggled with sight loss and impaired vision, due to MS, for the last eight years. It has been almost impossible to find help as I am told I don't qualify to be "registered". Please can you clarify the situation with regard to the classification of "blind". Do you think Gordon Brown is eligible to be registered blind? No doubt the classifications have changed since the 1948 National Assistance Act? Dean, via email

I was surprised to discover that Section 29 of the National Assistance Act is still the basis upon which the legal definition of "blind" is based, being defined as [being] "so blind that they cannot do any work for which eyesight is essential". It is also based upon visual acuity and visual field as measured by an ophthalmologist.

The question of registration is slightly different. Since
November 2003, people may be registered either as sight-impaired/partially sighted, or severely sight-impaired/blind.
This is also based on a given measure of visual acuity and visual field. Registration with a local authority is voluntary and, once registered, people are given a certificate of visual impairment.

However, there is another issue. Under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), people with a visual impairment may be considered disabled if their impairment is "long-term" and "substantially and adversely affects" their ability to do normal day-to-day activities.

It would be theoretically possible, therefore, to be "disabled" by a visual impairment under the terms of the DDA, whilst not being eligible for registration (by means of a

measure of visual acuity) or legally "blind" under the terms of the National Assistance Act.

One can imagine how waters become muddied. Any common-sense analysis would not regard Gordon Brown as blind, whilst any analysis of work for which eyesight is "essential" involves a degree of subjectivity and the analysis would differ today from 1948.

Hotel obligations

wonder if you could help me. I wonder if a large 3/4 star hotel has to provide any specific facilities for a disabled person. Do you have a tick box or assessment sheet that could be used by a hotel to see if they comply?

For example, providing a lift; staff making an effort to read a menu to a partially sighted person; or the receptionist coming to the correct side of the desk so a wheel-chair-user can sign their bill?

Tim, via email

Under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act,

Foot Anstey

Aeroplane anomaly

y wheelchair was extensively damaged by an airline on an outbound flight, which totally ruined my holiday. The airline paid for a new chair after an engineer's report stated that it was beyond economical repair. However, the holiday cost me over £3,000 and the airline has refused to pay me any compensation saying that as the new chair cost more than their liability limit, they will not pay any more. I am taking them to a small claims court but it looks like this is doomed to failure because I can only find references to a liability limit of £850 and my new chair cost £8,863. Do you know if there is anything else I can do?

Les, via email

I am really sorry to hear about your experience, although I fear your first analysis may be right that there is little more that the law actually requires them to do.

Even though the Disability Discrimination Act says that you must not be discriminated against by service providers (and clearly being without your chair will have ruined your holiday), there is an anomaly under the DDA which means that whilst transport buildings (such as airport terminals) are covered by the law, means of transport, such as aeroplanes, are not.

employers and serviceproviders (including hotels) are obliged to ensure that disabled people are not treated less favourably in the service they receive. Since October 2004, this has included providing physical access to premises.

In complying with the terms of the DDA, hotels would be expected, for example, to have rooms accessible to wheelchair-users, which may or may not require a lift; to provide information in alternative formats; and to have made staff aware of the importance of good practice in dealing with disabled customers.

The Holiday Care Service (now part of the Tourism for All consortium) inspects premises under the National Access Scheme and categorises them according to the facilities they provide and the layout of the premises, in order to give potential guests a clearer idea of how accessible they are.

If you are looking for a thorough analysis of the accessibility of a given premises, the National Register of Access Consultants (NRAC) also holds a database of access auditors and consultants who are qualified to give access advice to a uniform standard, using specific criteria, and to provide a written report and recommendations as required. • National Register of Access Consultants, 70 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1RL; tel: 020 7735 7845; SMS text: 07921 700 089; email: info@nrac.org.uk; visit www.nrac.org.uk Holiday Care/Tourism for All Access Advice, tel: 0845 124 9974; consultancy/email: brian@tourismforall.org.uk

Finding extra work

am interested in becoming a TV extra. Can you tell me how to go about it please?

The best way to go about becoming an extra, or supporting artist, is to contact a casting agent and go on their books. Most reputable agencies will not charge for being on their books, though inclusion in a directory, together with a photograph and other details could cost £100. You would never be charged to attend a genuine audition.

You need to be aware a number of agencies are less than reliable. Many only open once or twice a year. The best way to find reputable agencies looking for new people is to read a trade paper like *The Stage*. It is available on subscription, but your local library may also have, or be able to obtain, a copy.

www.thestage.co.uk



DN's telephone counsellor Lin Berwick gives disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psychotherapeutic counsellor and Methodist local preacher, with a postgraduate diploma in homeopathic medicine. If you have something you need to discuss in confidence, talk to her on Mondays.6pm-10pm and Thursdays 1pm-5pm, tel: 01787 882 111.

Do you have concerns about medical treatment received by you or a family member?

Foot Anstey are recognised as a leading firm in the investigation of medical negligence claims. We hold a franchise with the Legal Services Commission which enables us to offer Legal Aid in appropriate circumstances. Alternate methods of funding are also available.

If you have any concerns regarding medical treatment received please call our specialist team of lawyers who can provide advice and support.

For further information or to arrange an appointment please contact 0845 111 4008 or email: medical@foot-ansteys.co.uk

www.foot-ansteys.co.uk



ASK THE READERS

Does anyone have any advice for a single disabled man looking for a date? What are the best ways to meet someone?

Widen your circle

can think of two ways. One is to register with a dating agency. There is a whole range, often focused on specific groups. Most are reputable. A few are questionable.

Another approach is to widen your circle of friends, by joining clubs or classes, to meet people with similar interests.

SAGA caters specifically for people over 50 and has a wide range of activities and services. • SAGA, The Saga Building, Middelburg Square, Folkestone, Kent CT20 1AZ; tel: 01303 771 111; visit www.saga.co.uk Rachel Wilson

Get out and about

he one thing you have to do is get out and about. If you enjoy sport join a sports club, or a supporters club.

I was not disabled when I met my wife 37 years ago. She had spina bifida but she was in a nightclub when I met her. You need to be out to be seen. Mix and chat to people. Otherwise nobody is going to know you.

There are loads of things to

do even if your disability is severe. I am now a wheelchairuser yet coach sports. I have joined access groups, and kept my interest going. Robert

Don't look too hard

've learned not to look hard for a partner. If you look too hard you often end up with a bad egg who takes advantage because they know you're desperate. If a partnership's meant to be it will just happen. Sometimes in the strangest ways.

I met mine at the train station chatting to one of my friends. He invited me to his to have a cuppa and, near enough, I never went home again. Chazmunkee

NEXT MONTH'S QUESTION:

"Does anyone have any advice for a disabled person who has been badly treated by staff in a shop or supermarket?" Send your answers and your own questions to "Ask The Readers" at Disability Now at the usual address or email: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk



SIMON SAYS

Getting older as a disabled person is hard enough without losing your sexual identity

ecoming a disabled person is something that can happen to us at any time in our lives from the moment of conception through to the very end of our time. However, accepting that as part of our identity is not always so simple and something that many never do. It is a fact though that the majority of people with impairments, and thus potentially disabled people, are

It is easy when talking about sex to forget that this is an important part of everyone's life, from youth through to old age. Thinking about your parents, or the older couple at the day centre, making love or enjoying a sex life might not be something the young want to think about, but then remember that many nondisabled people adopt the same attitude to those of us who are disabled. Sex isn't the sole domain of youth.

Developing painful and

restricting conditions can make it more difficult to continue the physical side of our relationships as we grow older. Conditions such as strokes, Parkinson's and arthritis, whilst sometimes affecting younger people, largely affect older people.

But health and social care professionals more often than

'The worst exclusion is to be old, disabled and ignored as a sexual and full human being'

not ignore this aspect of a person's life, either assuming they are not sexually active or choosing not to address it due to their own hang-ups.

Getting older is hard enough without having to be treated in a way that marginalises your independence and sense of identity as a sexual being. Imagine having slept in the same bed with your partner for

30 or 40 years only to be "dumped" alone in a single bed downstairs because, following a stroke, you need carers to lift you. No one addresses you or your partner's feelings. Just being close in bed is now off the agenda because it interferes with manual handling regulations.

What if, as is likely as a disabled person, as you grow older your care needs increase? Who addresses the sexual and emotional aspects of your life? What if you end up in a home and have a partner or you are the disabled person whose lover or partner is now in a home? Equality for older people is as much a rights issue as it is for disabled people.

If we are lucky and tough enough we younger disabled people will be old one day. You might fall into the worst kind of exclusion: old, disabled and ignored as a sexual and full human being. Disability can affect your sex life at any age.

Send your relationship questions to "Simon Says" at the usual postal address or email: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk



Books



One Unknown Gill Hicks, Rodale, £16.99

ill Hicks was just one of the rush hour commuters caught up in the London bombings of 7 July, 2005, when suicide bombers detonated devices on three underground trains and one bus. She was one of the lucky ones - 52 passengers died that day, while Gill escaped with severe injuries that led to both legs being amputated below the knee and significant hearing

Two years on, and she has written a book about her experiences. It is certainly a dramatic and gripping story, albeit one we already know the ending of, and Gill's survival is quite miraculous. Having lost almost 80 per cent of her blood, her heart stopped at least three times before her condition was finally stabilised. She was the last passenger to be brought out of her carriage alive, and was labelled "one unknown" by

From then on, hers is a story of recovery and rehabilitation, as she learned to come to terms with what happened and

GILL HICKS SURVIVOR OF THE LONDON BOMBINGS



readjust to life as an amputee.

It is difficult to criticise an account of what was obviously a very difficult personal journey following a tragic and devastating event, but the book does feel long at 230 pages. In general, I loathe the kind of

triumph over disability stories that this inevitably is, but 7/7 was a tragedy, and one Gill Hicks was fortunate to survive.

She knows it. And after reading the inevitably saccharine, preachy, "live every day to the fullest" clichés that

litter her book, we definitely know it too.

Given that she became disabled in such a traumatic, public and sudden event, I doubt Gill's experience is something many disabled people can relate to, and this book says nothing new about disability. She is not a writer, and One Unknown is only a passable account of a moving story. Remember the reality of 7/7, but you don't need to buy the book.

Ivy Broadhead

Book news

The Dead of Summer (Harper Collins, £6.99) by Camilla Way recounts a long hot summer in the lives of four teenage friends, including Denis, who has learning difficulties. Their idyllic summer holiday has a tragic end.

Pete Bennett, who has Tourette's syndrome, was the winner of Big Brother in 2006 and published his autobiography, Pete: My Story, last year. His latest book, Pete: My Journey with Tourette's (Harper Collins, £6.99), is out this month.

Clare Allan's novel Poppy Shakespeare (Bloomsbury,

£7.99) is set in a psychiatric hospital and is inspired by the author's experiences of psychiatric care. The novel was longlisted for this year's Orange Broadband prize for fiction.

In Kim Edwards' novel The Memory Keeper's Daughter (Penguin, £7.99), set in the 1960s, doctor David Henry gives away his newborn twin daughter Phoebe, who has Down's syndrome. The book tells the story of the following years in the lives of the father and the nurse who adopts her.

More Than Eyes Can See (Marion Boyars, £8.99) by Rhidian Brook is an account of his visits to some of the world's HIV/AIDS epicentres. There will be a tie-in BBC1 TV drama.

The Jam: Unseen (Cyan Books, limited edition, £50, available May, standard version, £20, available August) is a photographic record of the band from its official photographer, Twink, who is disabled.

Children's books

Meet the Instruments of the Orchestra (Naxos, £14.99) by Genevieve Helsby takes a tour round an orchestra, with the help of deaf percussionist Evelyn Glennie. Comes with a CD. Aimed at 7-12-year-olds.

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What's on ®

Theatre

Inclusive theatre company Chickenshed's latest show "as the mother of a brown boy..." will preview at Chickenshed in Southgate, London, from 16-26 May and from 11-28 July, before going to the Edinburgh Festival. It tells the story of a mixed-race teenager in 21st century London.

• Tel: 020 8292 9222, www.chickenshed.org.uk

Events

Inclusive arts company Giant is launching the Giant Workshop Space, an inclusive arts venue for children, in Glasgow's Saltmarket this month. It will have workshops and exhibitions, a storytelling area and a training space. • Tel: 0141 357 5000,

Shape Arts is holding a visual arts and crafts career day at Tate Modern in London on 30 May, as part of its Link Up career development programme.

www.giantproductions.org

The event includes advice, information and speakers from arts organisations. • 10-4.30pm. Free (including lunch), but booking essential. Tel: 020 7619 6165,

email: linkup@shapearts.org.uk, www.shapearts.org.uk

textphone: 020 7619 6161,

Music

Singer Susan Hedges, who is blind, is appearing at former Beatles' haunt the Cavern Club, in Liverpool, as part of this year's International Pop Overthrow festival.

• 25-28 May. Tel: (Cavern Club) 0151 236 1965, www.susanhedges.com

The Heroes Project is holding a Frogtastic club night for people with learning difficulties in Manchester on 23 May. Clubbers must be over 18.

7.30-11pm. Tel: 07946 424075, www.heroesproject.org.uk

Wanted

Attitude is Everything is looking for disabled stewards and volunteers for summer festivals, including Glastonbury and Liberty. Deadline: 7 May.

• Tel: 020 7388 2227, email: festivals_attitudeiseverything @yahoo.co.uk

For more What's on: www.disabilitynow.org.uk

Film



Away From Her

way From Her, which is directed by the young Canadian actor and director Sarah Polley, is about the effect of dementia on people with the condition and those around them.

Fiona (Julie Christie) has been married to Grant (Gordon Pinsent) for 40 years. It has been a mostly happy marriage but it is clear that this intelligent woman is undergoing the initial stages of Alzheimer's, and is aware of gaps in her memory and understanding. She is fully in



control and decides that she should go to Meadowlake, a residential home, when she becomes unable to cope in their comfortable rural house.

Although Away From Her is supposed to be a portrayal of the loss of personality and identity due to dementia, it is, in my view, Alzheimer's Lite. It is a cosy, soft-focus portrayal of dementia. It is well-acted, but never fully conveys the disruption that can result from losing one's mental faculties. Julie Christie retains real beauty, but the film seems at times too bewitched with her looks and unaware of the chaos of deterioration. She's still stylish, witty and reflective.

The residential unit is perfect, with the staff, particularly Kristy (Kristen Thomson), unerringly helpful. When Fiona falls for another resident, Aubrey (Michael Murphy), Gordon retaliates by becoming involved with Aubrey's wife Marion (movingly portrayed by Olympia Dukakis). It is, like everything in this film, just a bit too neat and contrived, and I know from my personal experience of seeing dementia that it is just not like that.

Away From Her should have been braver, and should have explored the impact of dementia in a more honest

Michael Shamash









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GIVE YOUR LIFE ALIFT

Can you dig it?

Bob Ross highlights the latest products to make gardening easier this spring

MIDI SPORK

What? Digging the ground, turning the soil, etc, can be difficult, especially if you are gardening from a wheelchair or if you are short of stature. The Midi Spork is a digging tool which makes digging easier and would be of particular use to one-handed gardeners and wheelchair-users. The Spork, as its name suggests, is a hybrid between a spade and a fork, which means that it can shift more soil than a standard hand fork. The wooden shaft has a T-shaped handle that facilitates firm control from different angles even when using the Spork one-handed. It is 1m in length and weighs 820g.

How much? £18.50

Where? Sorby Hutton, Mansfield Road, Wales Bar, Sheffield S26 5PQ. Tel: 01909 773974 or visit www.handtoolsltd.co.uk

POWERED PRUNERS, LOPPERS AND SHEARS

What? Using powered technology to assist with gardening tasks, Wilkinson Sword has produced a range of power-assisted pruners, loppers and shears. Ergonomically designed, the range of cutting and pruning tools provide three times the cutting power of conventional cutting tools. They also reduce the amount of effort and strain on joints that often occurs when carrying out chopping, trimming or cutting-back. The pruners come in a range of hand sizes and the loppers have a range of different handle lengths in order to minimise the strain on arm and back muscles. The loppers are designed to tackle a range of branch thicknesses. In addition, Wilkinson Sword also provides a range of powered cultivating tools to assist with activities such as raking, hoeing and How much? Between £21.99 and £37.99

Where? Garden centres and branches of B&Q. Wilkinson Sword Gardening Products, Newlands Avenue, Bridgend, Glamorgan CF31 2XA. Tel: 01656 655595 or visit www.wilkinsonswordgarden.com

THE GARDEN GRIPPER

What? The Garden Gripper is ideal for picking up difficult-toreach bits of garden debris. The Gripper is a long-handled grabbing tool, similar to the household type of long reacher. Wide jaws and a fold-out litter spike make it useful for weeding and tidying up garden



rubbish. It is particularly handy for people who have problems bending or who need to remain seated while working in the garden. The Garden Gripper's overall length is 70cm.

How much? £12.99

Where? Gardena UK Ltd, 27-28, Blezard Business Park, Brankley Way, Seaton Burn, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne NE13 6DS. Email sales@gardena.co.uk or visit www.gardena.co.uk

SELF-PROPELLED LAWN MOWER

What? For those gardeners who require a heavy lawn mower but do not have the strength to push a conventional heavy mower, the selfpropelled lawn mower may solve a problem. Supplied by Bosch Lawn and Garden Products, the Windsor self-propelled mower only requires guiding, and has a speed control to enable it to be used to suit various ranges of ability.

How much? £319

Where? Bosch Lawn and Garden Products, PO Box 98, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB9 5HN. Tel: 0844 7360106 or visit www.atco.co.uk



FINGER LOOP SECATEURS

What? For gardening enthusiasts who have problems gripping tools, Finger Loop Secateurs could provide a solution. They have a soft grip on the top

of the

handle and

also have a loop on the bottom handle. The loop enables the user to apply pressure using both hands if required. The safety catch is easily visible and can be located from both sides of the tool. The secateurs can therefore be used by both left and right-handed gardeners. The Finger Loop Secateurs weigh 154g.

How much? £13.99 Where? Wilkinson Sword Gardening Products, Newlands Avenue, Bridgend, Glamorgan CF31 2XA. Tel: 01656 655595 or visit www.wilkinsonswordgarden.

GARDENING GOPHER

What? Moving and carrying gardening items can sometimes prove difficult and tiring. The Gardening Gopher is a neat and useful aid to moving tools, plants, refuse bags, etc, around the garden. The Garden Gopher is a very versatile gardening cart which can hold larger gardening tools such as forks, spades,

brooms, hoes, etc, in addition to also being useful for carrying smaller hand tools. The wheeled lightweight aluminium frame comes with a tray and tool holders and there is also room on the cart to carry a garden sack or bag of compost. The gardening cart has a carrying capacity of up to 20kg and is ideal for gardeners who have difficulty moving or carrying items or who have difficulty bending or using a conventional wheelbarrow.

How much? £49.99 Where? Available from most garden centres and branches of Woolworths. Tel: 0870 215 175 or visit www.garden gopher.co.uk



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Bob Ross is helpline manager for the Disabled Living Foundation

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Let's make waves Time to Get Equal Week, 18th June 2007

Time to get equal



What's On

Gowrings Mobility is holding several regional mobility information days throughout the summer, beginning on 2 May in Hull. The shows will provide opportunities to see the latest technology in wheelchair-accessible vehicles, and get advice and information. Tel: 0845 608 8020, www.gowringsmobility.co.uk

Happy to be Alive will be held at the Aspire national training centre in Stanmore on 11 May, hosted by the actor Luke Hamill, who has a spinal cord injury. The one-day conference will involve charities including Scope, Aspire and the Spinal Injuries Association, and will focus on life improvement and empowerment for people with spinal injuries. Wood Lane, Stanmore. *Tel: 020 8420 6700, www.aspire.org.uk*

The National Association for Bikers with a Disability

(NABD) is holding You've Been Nabbed 16 from 11-13 May at Astle Park, Chelford, Cheshire. The event will include bands, comedy, fire eaters and jugglers. From £15. Tel: 0870 759 0603, www.nabd.org.uk

Publications

Disability Alliance is

publishing the latest edition of the *Disability Rights Handbook* this month. The handbook includes information on benefits and services for disabled people, families, carers and advisers. Additions this year include changes to maternity and adoption benefits and an updated address list for national charities and organisations.

From £14. Tel/textphone: 020 7247 8776, www.disabilityalliance.org

Carers UK has produced a free booklet for carers titled The Employees Guide to Work and Caring, taking account of new legislation, which came into force last month, which will give employees who provide unpaid care the right to request flexible working

hours. Carers UK estimates that 2.6 million carers are set to benefit from the legislation. Tel: 0845 241 0963, email: publications@carersuk.org, www.carersuk.org
Freephone helpline: 0808 808 7777

Disfigurement charity **Changing Faces** has launched a guide to intimacy and relationships for people with

disfigurements, including tips and strategies. Tel: 0845 450 0275, downloadable free at www.changingfaces.org.uk

The Association of Disabled Professionals (ADP) has produced a resource guide, Setting up in Business, which includes advice on starting or expanding a business. Available in various formats. Tel: 01204 431638, www.adp.org.uk

Websites

Gojo is a new website aimed at making travelling by public transport easier for young disabled people. The website is part of a Disability Rights Commission (DRC) campaign which launches on 8 May, following changes to the Disability Discrimination Act in December 2006 which give

disabled people the right to fair treatment on public transport. www.gojo.co.uk

Ricability has tested more than 100 digital TV kits in preparation for the digital switchover (which begins later this year). For information and advice,

visit the Digital TV Consumer Test Reports website at www.ricabilitydigitaltv.org.uk

Easy-Web-Page provides accessible information for people with learning difficulties, using voices, pictures and video clips. *See www.easy-web-page.co.uk*

Snowdon Awards

Nearly 30 disabled students attended a charity reception in the House of Commons in March to celebrate their educational achievements. The students were some of the 77 who have received nearly £161,000 in funds from the Snowdon Award scheme in the past year. Lord Snowdon founded the scheme in 1981 to provide additional financial support for disabled students. It has funded assistance such as powered wheelchairs, audiovisual aids and sign language interpreters. To find out more and to apply for a grant, see www.snowdonawardscheme.org.uk

Accessible London

London Underground has launched an interactive travel information service, including a new accessible route planner, which will soon be integrated with the Transport for London (TfL) journey planner. See www.directenquiries.com

Following customer research, TfL has produced the guidebook *Getting Round London: Your Guide to Accessibility*. The guide is available at tube and bus stations, and from the 24-hour travel information helpline, *tel*: 020 7222 1234, *www.tfl.gov.uk*. *Available in various formats*.



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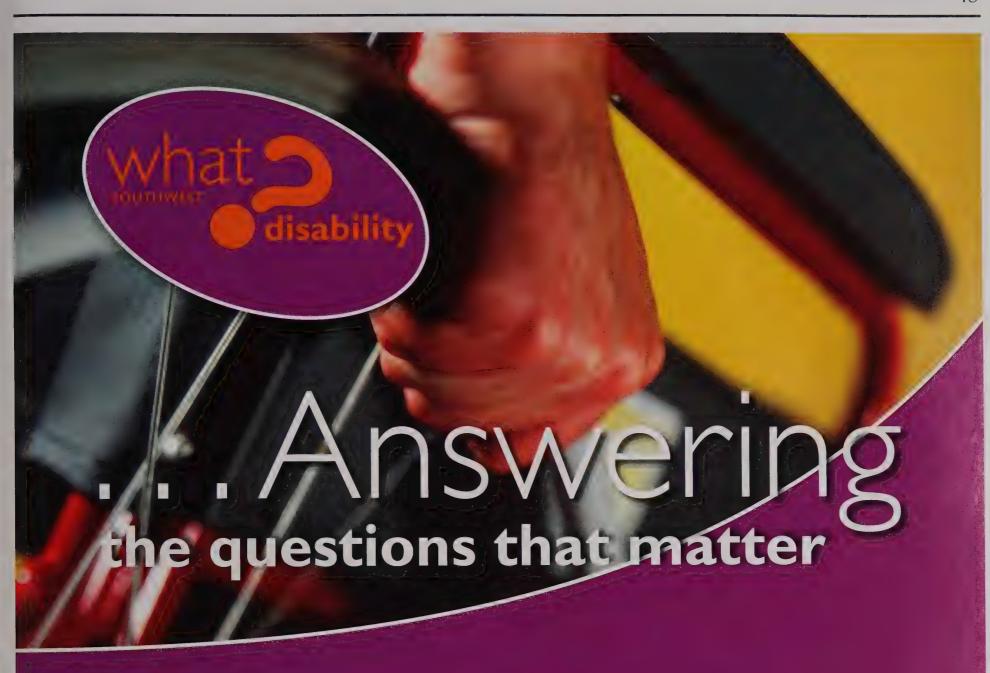
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RENAULT TRAFIC SWB 1.9 DCI Registered: 08/09/03, Blue, 6 seats, 6 speed manual, 26,000 miles, Air Bag, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Power Steering, Radio/single CD player, Remote Central Locking, Service History, Side load door, Twin front passenger seat, Three rear saloon passenger seats.

VOLKSWAGEN CARAVELLE SWB 2.5 LTR PETROL Registered: 20/11/00, Raven blue, 4 seats, Very good Condition, Manual, 83,000 miles, 5 door, Air Bag, Air conditioning, disabled vehicle, Electric Mirrors, Electric windows, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Remote Central Locking, RICON CLEARWAY electric wheelchair lift, Service History, Twin Side Doors,

FIAT SCUDO COMBI MONTANA 2.0 JTD Registered: 05/04/03, Blue, 3 seats, manual, 30,000 miles, 5 door, Air conditioning, Electric Mirrors, Electric reels, Electric windows, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, One rear saloon seat, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Remote £9,995 plus VAT Central Locking, Service History

RENAULT KANGOO 1.6 LTR PETROL Registered: 05/04/04, Silver, 2 seats, 1 owner, Immaculate, Automatic, 23,000 miles, 5 door, A.B.S, Air Bag, Air conditioning, Alloy wheels, Electric Mirrors, Electric windows, Electric reels, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, Power Steering. Radio/single CD player, Remote Central Locking, Service History, Twin Side Doors.

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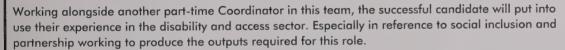


GMPTE is responsible for planning major strategic investments in public transport in Greater Manchester. It specifies the level and quality of services on the local train and tram networks and on some of the bus network. It also provides cheaper fares for elderly people, children and people with disabilities as well as bus stations, shelters and stops and travel information. A key role of GMPTE is to promote public transport.

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Disability Co-ordinator

14 hours per week. Ref: F131/A615 (12 months fixed term contract) Salary £24,776 - £28,984 pro rata



Proficient in various communication methods to a variety of people, the ability to assimilate and relay disability information will be a key part of work undertaken by the post holder. The development and maintenance of comprehensive recording mechanisms will also be required.

Candidates should be educated to degree level for, or be able to demonstrate a suitable level of experience, as a minimum requirement. Professional qualifications in a relevant subject, while desirable, are not essential.

Further information about the post, including the essential outputs the successful candidate will be expected to produce, can be found in the Role Profile provided as part of the application pack. If you feel you have the right experience, knowledge, skills and qualities to succeed in this role, we would like to hear from you.

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In order to ensure our workforce reflects the communities in which we work, applications from all sections of the community are encouraged.

Full job details and application packs are available on our website at www.gmpte.com/jobs.

Alternatively, call 0161 244 1852, quoting the job reference number of the position you are applying for, or email your postal address and the job reference number to hr@gmpte.com/jobs.

Completed applications must be received by 4pm on Thursday 10th May 2007.

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You can find out more about us, and our work, on our website www.dfid.gov.uk. You'll also find information about specific vacancies, opportunities, and an electronic application on the site.



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Help us create a Better Southend.

Southend is changing. The council is too. Our new Directors and Heads of Service have ambitious plans for the future. We are placing good customer care at the heart of everything we do, and our approach to equality and diversity must match our ambitions. If you have the drive and desire to create an inclusive future for the council and our community, then we would like to hear from you.

For further information on this role, please contact Beverley Nash, Strategy and Performance Advisor on 01702 215951.

To apply online or find out information on all our vacancies go to www.southend.gov.uk/jobs

Application packs for the above post are available from the Customer Contact Centre, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea SS2 6ER or telephone on 01702 215000 to obtain a pack. The opening hours are 8.45am - 5.15pm Monday to Friday. Please quote the appropriate reference.

New Deal applicants will be considered.

Application packs are available in alternative formats.

Closing date: 4th May 2007.

Shortlisting by: 14th May 2007.

Assessment and interview date: 1st June 2007.

This authority is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Applications are welcomed from people wishing to job share or work flexible patterns. We are an Equal Opportunities Employer and operate a no-smoking policy.

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Each home has experienced staff who are fully trained to meet individuals requirements.

For further information please contact the admin team. Tel: 020 8466 8069. They will be happy to assist you.

Recruitment (on page 47 to 50)



Part of the Department

Head of HR Strategy & Development Leeds • To £78,000 or London • To £82,000

The Pension Service is responsible for delivering front-line services to over 11.5 million pensioners and aims to combat poverty and promote security and independence in retirement for today's and future pensioners. An Executive Agency of the DWP, it places great emphasis on, and has received external praise for, its ability to understand and meet its customers' needs.

In order to support its commitment to improve service and operational performance, a new and exciting opportunity has arisen reporting to the Human Resources Director. The Head of HR Strategy and Development will lead the development and delivery of HR strategy and ensure that all aspects of organisational capability are addressed to match The Pension Service's journey of transformation. Organisational Development, together with job design, talent management, succession planning and leadership development are some of the main accountabilities. You will also work with key stakeholders to identify capability requirements and then develop and implement policies to address any gaps. Learning and development is another major area of responsibility.

For this business critical role and as deputy to the Human Resources Director, The Pension Service is looking for someone of substantial personal credibility with a proven track record of senior, strategic HR management experience. You could be an HR generalist with a clear understanding of organisational capability principles, approaches and frameworks. Experience of delivering cultural change in a complex, multi-site organisation is essential. You will also demonstrate an inspirational leadership style and have strong stakeholder management and influencing abilities. The successful individual will be expected to have the potential to grow into a more senior HR role

DWP is committed to providing services, which embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity in our working practices with all of our customers, colleagues and partners.









For further details or to apply online, visit hays.com/jobs/pensionservice or contact Andrew Timlin or Peter Armitage at Hays Executive. Closing date is Tuesday 8th May 2007.

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We are now looking for trustees to expand and diversify our board, and particularly welcome applicants with a strong track record in the arts, voluntary sector or disability.

This is an exciting time to join the board. We have ambitious plans to develop what we offer and to grow the Drake Music brand, including a high-profile research and performance project to mark our 20th anniversary. As a trustee, you will have the chance to shape and influence Drake Music's new direction and vision, and contribute your skills, energy and experience to a small, dynamic organisation with big ideas for the future.

For an informal chat, please call Bryan Heiser, chair of the board on 07970 908 282, or Carien Meijer, chief executive on 020 8692 9414. For further details and an information pack, please call 020 8692 9000, email info@drakemusicproject.org or go to www.drakemusicproject.org

Please apply in writing with a CV and covering letter to Drake Music, The Albany, Douglas Way, London SE8 4AG or to info@drakemusicproject.org

Closing date: Friday 1st June 2007

P/T REGIONAL PROGRAMME MANAGER

East Midlands region

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VAUXHALL COMBO 1.4 Chairman, 66k miles, Scarlet, seats 3 plus wheelchair with high roof and high front window. Central locking, hydraulic lowering rear suspension, electrically operated inertia reel straps. MOT Nov 2007. £3,750 ono. Tel 020 8874 4898 (London) or email mark.routh@btinternet.com

SILVER RENAULT KANGOO 1.5, Silver, Diesel, 6k miles, 2005, MOT until April 2008, Manufacturer's Warranty until July 2007, 5 door, driver airbags, immobiliser, PAS, Radio/CD player. Additional roof storage box. Conversion by McElmeels consisting of independent winches and seat belts. Still qualifies for Motability funding (18 months). £8,750 ono, (Paid £16,000 new). Tel 01992 423623 (H'ford) or i.bartlett3@ntlworld.com

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Cont'd see pg 49

BRITAX TRAVELLER PLUS childs car seat. As new. £275 ono. Tel: 01487 842389 (Cambs).

CHAIRMAN RENAULT KANGOO 1.6 Auto 2003 (53) with Gowrings conversion, silver, 19k miles, immaculate condition, folding ramp wheelchair access, fsh, abs, central locking, cd/mp3 player, fog lights, electric door mirrors. £8950. South Wales area. Tel: 07837495971 or 07791068541 or email: janlane@gmail.com

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NISSAN PRAIRIE 2L, Brotherwood conversion, J reg (1991), 93k miles, Central locking, Electric front windows, Rear ramp, Wheelchair retaining straps, Carries 5 inc wheelchair, MOT till Dec 2007, CD player, Ample head room and Good all round view. £2,000 ono. Tel 07745 742773 or amanda.blake@blueyonder.co.uk

FORD COURIER 1.3, automatic, metallic silver. Very reliable, excellent driving condition, 1996, road tax til July 07, MOT til November 07. Fully wheelchair accessible. 54k miles, £985 ono. Tel: 07939 037084.

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Tender



INVITATION FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR PROVISION OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICES

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions invites you to tender for the provision of the above Services on behalf of Department for Work and Pensions and the Office for Disability Issues (ODI). On I July 2004 a new DWP Social and Economic Research Framework Agreement commenced. The Framework Agreement covers the majority of DWP's commissioned research and other analytical projects. The main aim of the Framework Agreement is to enhance the efficiency of research procurement by reducing the number of tendering exercises in line with recommended industry good practice.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is now seeking to extend its current Framework Agreement. This will support the Office for Disability Issue's social and economic research activities, and the occupational health, vocational rehabilitation and health work and wellbeing agenda. Contracts awarded as a result of this invitation to tender will last for two years from the date of issue in line with existing contracts.

We would expect contractors to be familiar with the usual range of research methodologies and techniques, common to researchers across the Framework. We would welcome those with experience of qualitative and quantitative research and longitudinal research skills, as well as those using more innovative approaches to research around disability.

Because of the nature of the research outlined as part of the Invitation to Tender, we have a need for specific skills in relation to disability research. An inclusive approach to research is key: researchers and other organisations should either be able to demonstrate their ability to access the skills to ensure their research involves disabled people at all levels of research, or have access to the networks that will allow them to do so.

Framework contracts do not guarantee any, or a minimum volume of, work from the DWP.

If you are interested in being considered for inclusion in the Framework please send an Expression of Interest (EOI) with name of organisation and contact details to: Kate Callow (address below) by **2nd May 2007**. A full Invitation to Tender (ITT) will be dispatched by **9th May 2007** to organisations who have submitted an EOI by the declared date.

Further information, details and timetables will be included within the ITT. Once the ITTs have been dispatched and received by the research organisations, further questions can be answered in respect of the research. These steps will ensure provision of equal information to potential contractors.

Kate Callow, Senior Commercial and DWP Research Framework Manager, Level 2 Kings Court, 80 Hanover Way, Sheffield, S3 7UF. Kate.Callow1@dwp.gsi.gov.uk



Department for Work and Pensions

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NIPPI FOR SALE. Red, barely used, good condition. 55mph, Ramp and wheelchair attachment. £3,600ono. Tel: 01704 840 104 (Lancashire) or sam@samformby.wanadoo.co.uk

DAYS WHEELCHAIR, NEARLY new, excellent condition. Reclining chair with extendable legs, foot rests, tray and handbrake on rear. Collection only in Highgate, North London. £300. Tel: 020 7288 4749 or email: christopherbiggs@boltburdon.co.uk

CARONY WHEELCHAIR SYSTEM with Turney seat. Used once, £1,000 negotiable. Tel: 02380 558497 (Southampton).

STERLING RUBY ELECTRIC wheelchair. Highly manoeuvrable, ideal for indoor use. Three years old, excellent condition. Cost £1600, will accept £400 ono. Tel 01584 810802 (Shropshire) or email dpatrick@btinternet.com

Cont'd see pg

Recruitment (on page 47 to 50)



It's more than a logo to us

We see it as just the start of our commitment to ensuring that disabled people have real equality in the workplace. Find out more at www.playyourpart.co.uk

www.playyourpart.co.uk



Children's Society

Transportforall

TfA is looking for a Freelance Strategic Training Officer.

28 hrs pw. Contractual Fee: £20,948 for a one year contract.

Transport for All is an organisation of disabled people offering information, advice and advocacy about accessible transport issues across London.

We have a years' guaranteed funding for a freelance Strategic Training Officer to continue a programme offering self-assertion and strategic thinking skills to disabled people.

You will have experience in a training environment, a high degree of self-organisation, and experience of working with disabled people. You will also need to have a good understanding of Equal Opportunities issues and be committed to their implementation.

We are Positive about Disability; disabled people who meet the essential requirements guaranteed an interview.

Application forms from: contactus@transportforall.com or phone 020 7737 2339

Closing date: 7th May 2007

£27,000 plus benefits

pro-rata, 3 days per week)

range of art forms & media.

Application pack available at:

www.artsadmin.co.uk/jobs

www.bobbybakersdailylife.com

Artsadmin strives to be an equal

opportunities employer

Research

A new part-time post to manage and deliver an ambitious long-term plan of activity by one of the UK's leading performance artists,

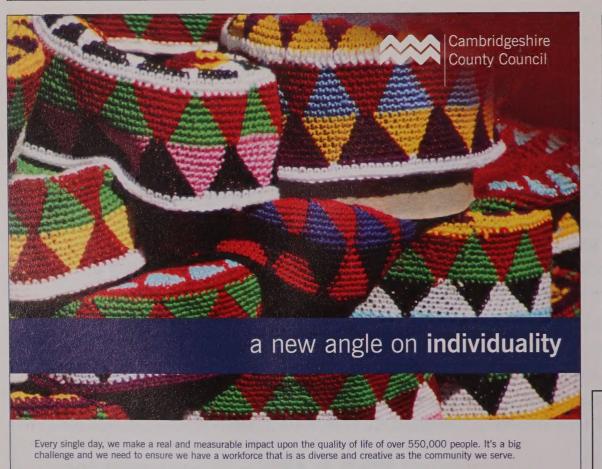
Based at the renovated Toynbee Studios in East London this dynamic, well-organised,

experienced arts manager/producer will

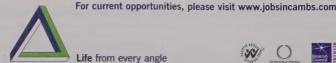
work as part of the Artsadmin team with

the support of a part-time administrative

working with creative projects across a



We are constantly striving to be the best employer that we can, with a passionate commitment to personal learning and development, flexible working and a work culture where individuality and imagination are valued. If you're looking for a new angle on life and work, then the answer's to be found at Cambridgeshire County Council.











www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

DEADLINE

Disability Now June 2007 published 26 May. Classified deadlines: Booking: 11 May. Copy: 15 May.

DN Extra May 2007 published 12 May. Classified deadlines: Booking and Copy: 2 May.

Producer (part-time) for **Household & Family** Bobby Baker's Daily Life Ltd.

2 FREEWAYHEAD 130 ceiling hoists, 3 years old, Cream, Electric, Perfect working order. £200. Tel: 01732 750529 (Kent).

STAND UP HOIST, Green, £1k Tel: 01732 750529 (Kent).

Property for sale

MID-TERRACE, VICTORIAN, 4 bedroom house; including loft conversion, fully wheelchair accessible throughout ground floor and stair lift to 1st bedroom and toilet. Bathroom on ground floor includes adjustable height sink and flush floor shower. Kitchen has low cooking and food preparation surface, low housed oven & adjustable height sink. Newly decorated inside and out. Ramps to back and front. Enclosed patio garden and disabled parking bay at front of house. Location: central Newmarket, Suffolk. £220,000. Please contact Mary on 07930 835 747.

Closing date 11th May Interviews 21st May

Participants Needed for Research Study

Purpose: to understand upper limb movements of individuals with hemiplegic cerebral palsy in order to develop potential therapeutic strategies

Who: individuals between the ages of 7-18 years with hemiplegic cerebral palsy who can understand instructions and have no functional or behavioural

difficulties that prevent them from completing the tasks Tasks: reaching, grasping, pulling and/or pouring with one

hand and with both hands together If you would like your child to participate or would like further

information, call 0113 343 8181 or email k.m.deutsch@leeds.ac.uk

Your involvement would be much appreciated

DN next month

All the best news, views and jobs. Available 29 May

THE FINAL LAP: Tanni Grey Thompson bows out at the Paralympic World Cup

IT'S SHOW-TIME: We pick the best of the best from the Naidex exhibition in Birmingham

THE BIG WHEEL: DN reports from the one and only London Wheelchair Marathon



Thanks to Electric Mobility, DN has a Liteway scooter worth £1,400 to give away, giving one lucky reader the chance to get out and about in style. The winner can choose one of two models, the Liteway 3 and the Liteway 4, depending on their individual requirements.

The Liteway 3 (right) has a dual front wheel for increased stability and easy manoeuvrability, and the Liteway 4 (left) has independent front suspension for a smooth, comfortable ride. Features of both models include dual finger/thumb controls, an adjustable tiller position, comfortable handgrips, extra-wide adjustable armrests, spacious legroom and padded seats for extra comfort. The alloy wheels have 9-inch solid, puncture-proof tyres for stability and effective grip. To make getting around even simpler, the scooters can be folded and loaded into a vehicle with the minimum of effort. They also dismantle easily without the need for tools.

An easy-release basket under the seat is handy for shopping, and enables the rider to keep their valuables close to them. Another practical plus is the removable lightweight battery pack, which makes recharging simple.

Optional extras include an additional battery pack, a front basket for extra storage and a swivel seat.

Choose from three eye-catching colours – Salsa red, Icelandic blue and Graphite. The scooters can carry riders of up to 21 stone.

For your chance to enter, tick 'Liteway scooter' in the entry form. Closing date: 25 May. To find out more about Electric Mobility's range, which includes power chairs and riser-recliners, tel: 0800 252 614, or see www.electricmobility.co.uk

Tick the competition circle below, add your details, and send to Disability Now, Freepost WD4323, London N7 9BR, or you can fax it on 020 7619 7331, or email the details to: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

LITEWAY SCOOTER

Address

Tel

Name

Email

Closing date for entrants: 25.05.07 • Entrants must be over 18 • No proof of purchase required • UK entrants only • No cash alternatives • Winners notified by terms & conditions post • Editor's decision is final • Special offers not open to DN staff or associates • Winners may be announced in DN • In association with Electric Mobility. We may use your name and address for further marketing purposes. Please tick the box if you do not wish your details to be included 🗖



Better by Design

All New Toyota Hiace

- Central Locking
 - Metallic Paint
- Electric Windows

5Yr Lease From £3,700* From Only £16,450

Better for Comfort



5yr lease price starts from £5,411* VW Prices start from £17,950

Better for Access

VW Shuttle SE VW Cruiser MK III

- Up to 6 Luxury seats
- as standard Front seat comfort Five door all round
- Upgraded rear carpet Unique interior light

Metallic paint as

specification Up to 6 Luxury seats

and Executive vehicle Top of the range SE Five door all round

Metallic paint as standard standard*

VW Caravelle

Fully flexible seating Air conditioning as





Optional Front wheelchair Position

Better for Choice, Service and Value

& Lowering Air Suspension Option TorSpring Ramp®, Semi High Roof

or Rear Ramp & Winch as Standard

Optional Side or Rear Access Lift

VW Caddy Life

Brand new model with Flexi-seat® and TorSpring® ramp as standard apperance pack as Metallic paint and standard*

Berlingo

5yr lease price from £2,545* Prices start from £12,795 With Free Metallic Paint[†]

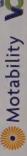
With Free Metallic Paint and air conditioning Kangoo



10ffer applies to stock models only *Offers applies to all orders received before 30th June 2007

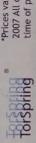
Call 0845 345 0127 (lo-call rate) or visit www.lewisreedgroup.co.uk











*Prices valid until 30th June 2007 All details correct at time of print.

website: www.disabilitynow.org.uk

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Jobs p47-50 and

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